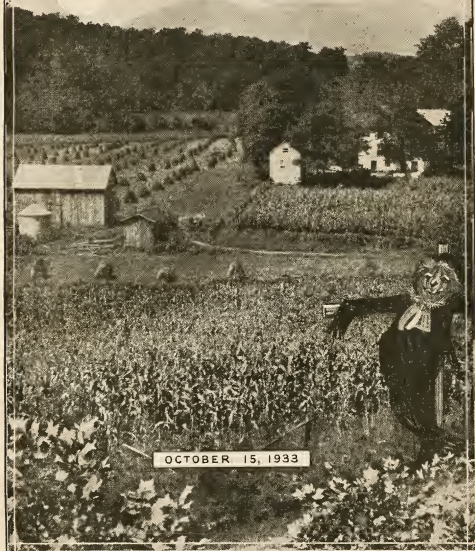


GRIT

STORY
SECTION



OCTOBER 15, 1933

ACTION, NOT DREAMING—A Short Story You're Sure to Enjoy—IN THIS ISSUE

Flame of the Border

Vingie E. Roe

THE CHARACTERS AND THE PLOT

THE story opens with Dr. Sonya Savarin suspended by her finger tips over 300 feet of space. Above her a man's face, young and lean and wild as a hawk's, watched her with an anxiety that brought sweat to the temples. He begged her to catch hold of the rope which swung its loop at her shoulder. Only when he gave his word that he would not further molest her did the fast tiring girl permit herself to be pulled up to safety.

Then the young westerner tried to apologize for his mistake in judgment, but the girl dashed away on her tall black horse while the man still mumbled his remorse. A few hours later she rode into the stone-flagged patio of her brother's ranch house and was greeted by Rodney Blake, of New York City, on his third visit to the West in the hope of persuading her to keep her promise to marry him.

The easterner was the guest of Serge Savarin, and he had chafed all day while his host had tended his sheep and Sonya had paid a professional call on the desperately sick wife of Two Fingers, a Navajo Indian. The hours had passed all too slowly as Serge's wife, Lila, busied herself with the care of her little daughter, Baba, and the multiplicity of duties about the ranch house.

Despite the protests of Rod Blake, the girl who had received her medical training in the East and could have had a profitable practice there declared she would start out early the next morning for the bedside of the Indian woman whose only hope of further existence lay in the attention Sonya could give her.

In the hogan beyond Chee Wash, Sonya fought her battle with death, and won. Tired to a point nearing exhaustion but happy in the thought of having restored Little Moon to her dusky husband and their two brown babies, Dr. Savarin prepared to ride back to the ranch house. Her fiancé has come to accompany her back when around the bulge of the hogan strides a tall figure in a blue shirt, worn chaps, and high-heeled boots—the stranger to save herself from whom the girl had almost dropped to her death. Now the story.

CHAPTER III

THE ride back to the ranch was beautiful beyond words, with the newly risen sun bathing the weathered peaks and pinnacles of desert stone, the rolling sagebrush levels, in its gold and crimson light, slashed by sharp blue shadows. But somehow its glory missed the girl's heart. Something was lacking, or rather something had come into her consciousness, which seemed for once to blind her vision to it.

Whether it was seeing again the face of the man of Lone Mesa, or Rod's unreasoning jealousy, she could not say. At any rate, she was silent and preoccupied, and more than once Blake looked at her sharply.

"Sonya," he said presently, "I know you are tired, that you've had a hard night, but I want to have a talk with you, and this seems the best chance I'm likely to have, since you are so busy all the time. You are like the proverbial flea," he added whimsically: "when I put my finger on you, you're not there. A dear flea, however, and one I'm going to catch if it takes me a lifetime."

He smiled at her, and Sonya smiled back with a thrill at her tired heart. He was so handsome when he smiled. Handsome at any time, she thought loyally.

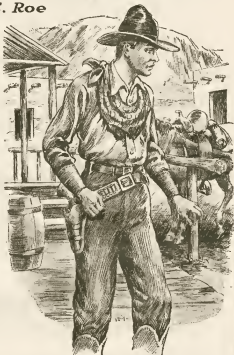
"I know," she said, "I do seem on the fly—or the hop—most of the time, but there's such good reason, Rod."

"Granted. But how long is it going to continue? My longing and love for you are an old story. I'm not going into it again. I'm just telling you that I'm leaving for the East day after tomorrow, and it has been my hope to take you back this time. Sonya darling, will you come?"

He reached over and took her hand, and at the caressing pressure of his fingers tears actually came to the girl's eyes.

Maybe because she was so tired, maybe because she needed a bit of looking after herself. At any rate, she was sorely strained to keep from sniveling openly.

Then she shook herself mentally, squared her shoulders, as it were. She, to totter with self-pity, to want to fling herself on a man's breast and be petted for the great work she had done last night in the hogan in Chee Wash? And it was great work, and she was no quitter. She smiled into Rod's eyes, squeezed his hand.



"Miss Savarin, Can I Speak to You a Minute?" Sonya Straightened Up and Looked at the Owner of the Voice

"I didn't know you were going back so soon, dear," she said steadily, "and I think I want to go along, but there is the woman back there who will surely die, after all my hard pull to save her, if I leave her now. She needs care and stringent treatment, and there is no one on the reservation who can— who will—give it to her. I can't leave her, Rod."

The man straightened up, loosed her hand.

It was not in human nature to take a blow like this and not feel its impact. He looked straight ahead for a little while, riding with his hands crossed on his pommel, and Sonya watched him anxiously.

"It isn't a whim, Rod. Nor other men. I haven't looked at another man since I gave you my promise. It's a bigger thing than that. Bigger than myself, bigger than you, I think. It's something which partakes of the universal, the infinite. Something inside my soul, an obligation to—the Creator Himself," she added hesitantly, "if you see what I mean. I have the knowledge, the health—here is the opportunity, the

crying need. Let me stay with them a while longer, Rod, please. Let me teach them more hygiene, more child care, more mother care. They know so little, have so little."

Blake drew a long breath, looked back at her, his eyes dilated and deep with feeling.

"You should be a Portia," he said, "you plead so eloquently. And for a bunch of dirty redskins who'd cut your throat for a dollar any day."

Sonya's lips fell open. She thought of

STORY SECTION

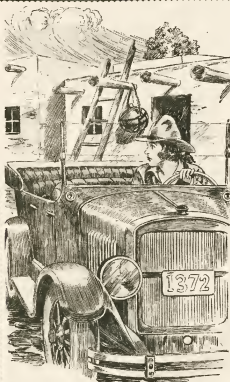
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Williamsport, Pa., Oct. 15, 1933



Two Fingers' eyes across her saddle seat, their darkness, their depth; of his low voice saying, "There was a Blue Woman of the South once . . . she was all goodness . . . she makes her hogan in your heart."

How little this man knew, this man of the cities, of the rushing world beyond the desert! How appallingly inadequate his judgments!

What he was missing of the mystery of life, its priceless gifts of spirit, its lighted depths! A tender yearning for this blindness in him welled up in her, and she touched his arm.

"Forgive me," she said, "I see how it must seem to you, but believe me, Rod, it is not so. I can not make you see it. Only try to believe what I say about it. Won't you dear? Stand steady for another stretch, until I can do a little more, leave my mark a little plainer in this soil which I love, among these people whom I love, too."

Blake shrugged his shoulders under his thin leather coat. "I suppose I must, or go down in your black books as a tyrant. Very well, Sonya, I'll give you six months longer, but at the end of that time I shall demand the fulfillment of your promise to me, and I shall expect you as an honorable woman to keep it."

"But know this, my girl: that I shall never give you up. Neither Indians nor Arizona nor any living man is going to get you from me. Just remember that."

"Why, of course, Rod. And thank you for being so kind."

"I'm not kind. I'm helpless. I have no choice in the matter. Either I give you your way, or I lose your esteem by forcing you to mine. And that's that."

They rode in silence that was a bit constrained for a long distance. The sun was well up now, and the cold of the desert night had given place to a sweet and languid warmth which would be heat by noon.

The sand, lightened by this warmth, puffed under the

horses' feet at every step. There was a vast silence in all the lone world.

And presently into the stillness there was injected a sound, so thin and fine at first as to be no sound, but becoming more clear and certain as they rode ahead. It caught on Sonya's desert-trained ears long before Rod heard it, and her head was up, a line between her brows.

She searched the levels and the broken battlement of stone that rimmed them at their back, the debouching canyon mouths. It was down one of these that she determined presently the sound was coming: a long, high wail almost like that which the Indian women gave at a death. It rose and sank with a shivery rhythm, a long despairing plaint that mourned from the very depths of a soul, it seemed.

At that moment Rod heard it too.

"For the love of heaven!" he said wonderingly, "what's that?"

"Come along," said Sonya briefly and lifted Darkness with her knees and rein. The horse leaped away to the right where the canyons flattened to the plain. And coming out of one of these long deiles that cut the jumbled Bad Land country was as strange a cavalcade as one might meet in many a day's journey.

A team and buckboard with the huge figure of a white man hunched on the seat and three children huddled in behind, little brown Navajos hushed down like quail, their scared round faces turned backward to where a woman hung on to the rig's tail and cried to heaven, running when the horses trotted, her mouth open, her braided hair in disarray where she had torn at it, stumbling, swaying with fatigue.

She was a "wild squaw," namely one who spoke only her native tongue, and all tragedy, all loss, all fear and terror were in her swollen opaque eyes. A man ran behind her, a tall Navajo with bound hair and turquoise necklaces swinging on his breast. He touched her now and then, tried to still her clamor with his low words.

Sonya pulled Darkness in beside the rig, which stopped at her approach.

"Why, Mr. Satter?" she said, "what does this mean?"

"It means that these Navajos are resisting an officer," the man said harshly, "and's likely to get 'em into trouble when I report it. You know what they are to handle, Miss Savarin, especially these wild ones."

"Why, surely I know, but isn't this a little rough? You taking the children to the school?"

"Yes. They should 'a' been there last fall. Term's almost over. But they kept 'em hid out so good we never could find a one. Didn't think they had but two, and here's three."

Sonya had dismounted. She went around behind the light wagon and spoke in Navajo.

"Tell me thy heart. I am thy sister," she said.

The woman glanced at her, her shaking arms around the youngest child, which had scuttled to her breast the minute the rig stopped.

The man came up and faced her, searching her face with troubled eyes.

Instantly Sonya was this mother, this father, in their clouded misunderstanding, seeing their little ones torn from their grasp. Whatever it was that shone in her face, the man saw it, trusted her at once, knew her for herself, having heard of her though he had never seen her.

He knew the hopelessness of the situation, realized their helplessness, where the woman did not.

"They go," he said, panting, "and she will not give up."

Sonya laid her arm around the heaving shoulders of the wailing woman. She looked up at the man on the seat.

"Mr. Satter," she said, "don't you think you could leave them one? Just this little one, the baby? You know it's hard to give them up—any of them—and this is so little. Couldn't you? Please, Mr. Satter? Just for me? I'll go before the superintendent and make it right if you will. I think I can. Won't you please let them have the baby?"

There was in Sonya's voice all the guise of womankind since Eve, a coaxing quality that had wrought on the hearts of men since she was born. Her long black eyes pleaded gravely. Satter moved on his seat, flicked his whip, looked at her and down at his boots.

"Well," he said, "I was sent to get 'em."

"But only two. You didn't even know there were three," she coaxed. "Come on—let me give them back the baby."

"Oh, well—" he said reluctantly.

Instantly the girl reached in and pulled the baby clear of

the wagon, the mother with it. It was not really a baby, being a fair-sized youngster, but the least of the three. With her arm across the two she pushed them away from the wagon. Then she began speaking rapidly in Navajo.

It was the white man's law, which was above tribal law, she told them, that the children go to the schools where they would learn the white man's ways, where they would be fed and clothed.

They would become wise and above their station at the present time, being better for the knowledge they would get. And she, the mother, would have them back soon for a visit, hearing all about what they had learned and eaten in the meantime. The little one she could keep now, providing she would go back to her hogan in peace. If not, it too would go.

Would she listen to the white man's law? Would she take her one child instead of losing three—for a little time only?

The man spoke, and the woman, with her tragic eyes on the little scared faces in the wagon's tail, hugging her babe, nodded.

"O K, Mr. Satter," Sonya said guardedly.

Satter struck his near horse, and the buckboard bounced away.

Turning in stark and tragic resignation, the two bedraggled figures moved off toward the canyon's mouth, the woman's eyes still strained back across her shoulder where her children were disappearing in the distance. The tall man looked back at Sonya, and his eyes spoke—like Two Fingers' had.

Blinded by tears, the girl climbed back in her saddle. She had forgotten Rodney Blake entirely. It was not until they were well out on the desert's floor that she remembered him.

"Rod," she said then, "do you see now why I can not leave them? There is so much to do for them. They need me so!"

"Yes," he said coldly, "I see."

There was something in his tone which caused the conversation to languish, and they rode for miles through the early day without speech. Sonya was thinking sadly of the tragic brown pair going back to their hogan with one child where there had been three, of their bewilderment and misunderstanding, of Satter's harshness. Oh, when, she wondered miserably, would white men come to treat the Indians with justice?

So engrossed was she with the sorry problem that they were in sight of the home ranch before she thought of Rodney Blake again.

Then she stirred in her saddle and looked at him.

"Did you say you are leaving the day after tomorrow, Rod?" she asked.

"I did, but I might as well have kept the information, for all the impression it made."

"Oh, no, dear. I'm just so—so full of troubles, you know. I didn't mean to seem careless. You know I didn't."

"I wish to heaven I did, Sonya!" the man said passionately. "Well, remember the rest of the things I said—particularly that no man or anything shall get you from me, that I mean to have you for my own if it's the last thing I ever do in life. Just remember that, my girl."

A flush came in Sonya's face.

"I suppose I should be flattered," she said sharply, "but I am not. There is something about this attitude of yours, Rod, that angers me—a seeming of command that goes down hard with me. One's life is his own, marriage or no marriage, to a certain extent, you know. I'm not the type of woman who can be completely absorbed."

"Forgive me," Blake said quickly. "Perhaps I do seem dictatorial, but my excuse must be that ancient one which covers a multitude of sins—great love."

"I wonder," said Sonya.

They rode together into the ranch yard, and Sonya herself put Darkness away in the cool stone barn, took off his saddle, patted his neck.

"Good man," she said fondly.

"Meaning me?" asked Blake from the next stall, where he was tying Serge's mare.

"Say," said Sonya, laughing, "if men were as faithful as horses, there wouldn't be a bachelor in the world!"

For the next 36 hours Sonya devoted herself as much as possible to this man who loomed so large on the horizon of her life, a little sorry for the rift between them, searching her heart for sympathy with his cause, wondering if she had been careless of his comfort or his happiness. But, search as she would, the face of Little Moon came before his, the eyes of Two Fingers drifted across his eyes, the soft gutturals blurred his clipped speech in her ears.

"Well," she sighed to herself, "I don't know. Guess it'll just have to work itself out. Life always works out if we are patient, so Lila says—and she knows."

Sonya made a hurried trip next day to Chee Wash and found the woman much better.

"So," she told her happily, smoothing the gaunt young cheek. "we made the good fight together. All is well, little mother."

And it was well, indeed, with Two Fingers making mutton broth over a little brushwood fire outside the hogan, and the two babies shy as quail under the dried branch canopy that served as summer shelter against the sun. Little Moon's bright rug, half finished, bloomed from the sand on its tall loom.

Yes, it was well—quiet and lovely and well—and Sonya's heart felt sweet inside her with the beauty of this thing.

She fed Little Moon the juice of some fruit which she had brought in her saddlebags, and spread some old clean sheets beneath her tired body over the sandy blankets.

"The gruel, and the broth, and crackers in it now, Two Fingers," she told him, smiling, "and soon she will be up and walking. Maybe ten sleeps, maybe eight."

And Two Fingers smiled back his slow smile, and the young doctor rode away.

She spent that last evening in the patio with Rodney Blake, alone under the stars, swinging in the fringed hammock, her hand between his palms, his low voice in her ears, speaking of the future. Serge and Lila, sensing the strain between them, had retired early. And Sonya put her arms about Rod's neck, kissed him and took his kisses, and felt happy.

It was late when they separated in

the living room, tip-toeing in like a pair of 16-year-olds, laughing in whispers, and early when they all gathered again for breakfast. It was quite a drive down to the little town where Rod would take the train for New York, and Sonya, who was driving him, wanted an early start.

There was a semblance of road across the sandy levels, and the girl drove the disreputable family car as she rode Darkness, high, wide and handsome, as Serge always said, arriving in the little desert town in good time.

The last moments on a station platform are always filled with strange emotions, forebodings, and vague fears tinged with the sadness of parting, and Sonya was genuinely close to tears as she watched the handsome Rod about his ticket-buying, his trunk-checking. For one panicky second she wished she were going with him, trim in natty traveling clothes, a proper hat on her bare black head, a marriage certificate in her bag.

Then she shook herself indignantly, ran with him down the platform beside the slowing train, kissed him fervently, watched him go away across the desert on the observation platform of the Limited.

There was a little mist in her dark eyes, but as she climbed back in the car and turned away toward the main street of the town to do some shopping for the ranch, she was surprised and a bit dismayed at the odd feeling of lightness, of freedom, which came over her.

"Ingrate!" she told herself, "you don't deserve a good man's love. I begin to suspect you're a spinster eek, selfish and lazy, and due to take on fat in wads some day as punishment!"

CHAPTER IV

THE little town, close on the border of the reservation, was typical of all desert towns, lonely and bleak and washed continually with wind and sand. It held a store or two, a blacksmith shop, a tiny station on the railroad line, and the customary tanks of water.

Now it lay beneath the early noon-day sun, silent and half asleep after the going of the overland train. A few white men went about the business of trading at the store, and more Indians stood idly against this wall or that, their still faces and soft low speech eloquent of leisure.

These latter were for the most part what the white men called educated Indians, namely those who had enjoyed the somewhat doubtful advantages of the government schools, to be later turned back to tribal life and its discontent. There was about them to Sonya a pathos, a seeming of bewilderment, as if their mute eyes asked of the world at large, "What shall we do now?" They knew her by sight and hearsay and watched her with interest.

She parked the car in front of the general store, and taking her handbag from the seat beside her, climbed out and entered.

The store was an interesting place, high ceiled and cool and damp from the sprinkling of its rough board floors. Its shelves were packed with the thousand and one household necessities which go to the living of life in lonely

places, and it boasted two clerks besides the owner.

This owner was a bland fat man by the name of Parks, a man whom Sonya disliked intensely, but who never allowed any one excepting itself to wait on her. He came forward now, the creases of his heavy face set deep with smiles.

"Why, Miss Savarin!" he said unctuously, "ain't you down early?"

"No," said Sonya soberly, "it's nearly noon. I came to bring a guest to take the train."

"I see, I see. How is your brother and his wife? Ain't seen them for some time. Hope th' feed is good this year with you. Heard it was."

"Yes, it is. The sheep look well."

"That's good, that's good. Now, let's see, Miss Sonya, what can we do for you? Like some nice fresh fruit? Got in some right good oranges an' grapefruit this week."

Sonya spent some time in the store,

head, his lean hips bolted, the everlasting cigaret in his fingers.

The two men with him were dark and rough men of 'secret eyes and narrow lips, in appearance the worst of the border types which Sonya knew, and she prided herself she had seen them all in this man's country. Bad hombres, she told herself, after the first swift glance, fit companions to that drunken libertine who had dragged her from her horse on the top of Lone Mesa.

At that memory her face burned with hot anger and she set her lovely full-lipped mouth into a stern line, shook her shoulders exactly as if she flung off some actual repellent touch.

"I'll take these and these, Mr. Parks," she said clearly, "and a hundred pounds of flour. Also a sack of sugar and four pounds of rice. Please be quick as possible."

"Yes, Miss Savarin, yes, ma'am. Right

door and out. So stirred was she within herself that she slumped in her seat, her hands thrust in her sweater pockets, and did not turn even when she heard Parks, or who she thought was Parks, come out across the porch with her box of supplies.

"Put them in back," she said, nodding over her shoulder, "and thanks."

As she reached for the gearshift she stopped in the act, arrested by a voice that was not Parks'.

"Miss Savarin," it said, "can I speak to you a minute?"

Sonya straightened up and looked at the owner of the voice. Straight in the eyes she looked him, her mouth shut hard again.

And at that straight look she saw again the wild blue eyes under the level bronze brows that had stared down in her face as she hung to the dead root of the pinyon stump on the windswept face of Lone Mesa.

But they were vastly changed. The black pupils that had spread so wildly over the blue of the iris that day were normal now, the expression anxious.

"Well?" she said thinly. "Why should you talk to me?"

"Why—why, just because it seems I must. I want to—tell you—to ask you if—Can you believe me when I tell you that I've never had a minute's peace since that day on the Mesa? I've never forgotten your face—or your hands—or the wind blowing your hair up around your head when you hung—there."

"I'm a bad lot, Miss Savarin, and not fit to speak to you or look at you, but no matter what I am I've got to tell you this—that there's enough white man in me to make me live in hell because of what I did—or tried to do to you."

"I'm on my knees to you. Not asking your forgiveness—that couldn't be—but just down in the dirt and wanting you to know it. That's all. Thanks for listening."

He took off his hat and turned sharply on his heel, and as Sonya threw in the clutch and roared away she was conscious of the two dark strangers and Parks in the shadow of the doorway intently watching them both.

It was not until she was far out on the sage that she remembered her sack of sugar. She had only the box which the stranger had put in. It contained everything but the sugar, the hundred-pound sack being a separate load for a man in itself, and Lila would be wild, since she had wanted it particularly. Instinctively she showed the car, debating with herself what she should do. Should she go back?

No. That was out of the question—anti-climax. Lila would just have to wait until she could drive down again. She'd make a special trip, perhaps tomorrow or the day after. She'd tell Lila she'd forgotten it, which was the literal truth, though why she had forgotten was another matter.

So. He was in hell, was he? In the dirt, was he? Well, that was where he deserved to be, rotter that he was.

A tall man. Lean and built with unusual grace. Narrow—hipped, broad-shouldered, straight in the back. He wore a blue flannel shirt with pearl buttons and a dark Stetson hat and there

Continued on Page 21



"I Don't Believe You Love Rod, Honestly, Deep Down, as a Woman Should Love the Man She Marries"

buying a fair supply of the oranges and grapefruit, thinking of the little sick woman, and of more staple things for Lila.

As she walked briskly about, selecting this and that, there was the stir of arrival at the high board porch outside the clump and clank of booted feet at the wide doorsill. Three men were coming in, and Sonya looked up from her task casually, as one does in such circumstances.

Instantly she felt the annoying prick of her skin, the odd anger that had seared her before, for one of the newcomers was the tall bronze man of Lone Mesa. He swung in at the open door, his wide hat on the side of his arrogant

with you. Shall I bring them to th' car?"

"It's right in front. I'll be waiting."

She strode forward, head up, eyes straight, and had to pass within five feet of the three men who had entered. As she did so she was conscious of the eyes, under the tilted hat-brim, on her face. It was as if a strong magnetic current pulled at her in passing, as if some inarticulate power focused all its strength upon her that she might look aside. So strong and compelling was this that to save her life she could not help the flicker of her eyelids, the almost unbearable desire to turn and look.

But she did not turn. Angry to her boot heels, both with her outraged memory and with herself, she walked to the

Winning the Husband She Wanted Is Accomplished by Action, Not Dreaming

J. Lilian Vandevere



MISS GRIGGS, explaining to Claire Hollister her new duties, pointed to Bradford Burnham's imposing engagement calendar.

"Besides the routine secretarial work," she said, "you're to keep track of that and of him. If you're too anxious about it, he'll be cross. If you let him miss anything, he'll be crosser still. Add that up and divide it, and if you got the right answer, you'll do more than my secretary so far. His secretaries last about two months," she warned bluntly. "Then they misspell obligato, or forget sample copies for his special friends. I hope you'll be different."

Having thus definitely outlined the prospects, Miss Griggs left Claire alone at her new desk. She was looking over the supplies when the door opened, and she rose to meet her new employer.

It seemed that in a single movement Bradford Burnham tossed aside his hat and coat, selected a letter from his mail, and gave her a swift scrutiny.

"New victim?" he asked.

He rumbled his coppery hair with a funny blend of annoyance and resignation, and was lost in reading before she could answer.

"Take a letter, please," he murmured absently, and with no more preamble her work with him began.

As she looked up now and then she noted the harmony of browns in Bradford's shoes and scarf and shirt. She snatched interested glances at his deep brown eyes, and the humorous corners of his mouth.

And as she worked she thought of a certain clipping in her handbag. Of course, it was only a theory. She was a fool to do anything but concentrate on this new position. Perhaps this foolish dream and her new work were meant to begin together.

Her hazel eyes flickered for an instant with an odd light, as she watched the man behind the desk. Then they were lowered dutifully, to follow her flying pencil.

In the busy days that followed she was conscious that the office force sniffed as they appraised her.

"She's the kind that takes non-fiction out of the library," said Agnes Kennedy, the filing clerk.

"Eats alone at the coffee shop and reads," said another girl.

"Nice girl," said Natalie Jepson, of the billing department, "but no action. If B. B. didn't dictate now and then, she wouldn't know that he was there. Think what some folks could make of the chance to work for him! She'll be there in his office when she's 50, wearing snooty folding eyeglasses on a silver chain."

So they neatly disposed of Claire as a competitor on the masculine hunting ground. Claire, quietly busy, kept in

mind that clipping, and apparently did little to prove them wrong.

On the day that Francine Orway came into Bradford's office, a sniffly cold had bleared Claire's eyes and reddened her nose. She had worn an old serge, for the rain was falling drearily at breakfast time, and now a bland sun made sport of her.

Then appeared Francine, smart assured, and a shade too gracious. She settled in Bradford's office, awaiting his return. With a possessive complacency she regarded her own photograph in the leather frame on Bradford's desk.

When Francine had left, having wasted a valuable half-hour, managed a luncheon engagement, and wrecked Claire's peace of mind, the office still seemed full of brittle laughter and subtle perfume. Claire reread her clipping, bracing her soul anew to answer its confident call.

"Come on with the action," she told herself sharply. "Why play the shrimp, just as things get really interesting?"

At 4:30 Bradford took up his long-neglected correspondence, and without protest Claire turned page after page in her notebook. Absently Bradford switched on the lights, and kept up his dictation. Then he glanced at his watch and up at Claire with quick remorse.

"Good heavens—half-past six! Why didn't you stop me?" he cried. "Let me take you home, to make up for this."

"I stay in town for a class at the Y. W. tonight," said Claire.

"I'll drop you there," he insisted as he drew on his coat.

So she got into his car, with a tingle out of all proportion to the simple courtesy. How could nothing mean so much?

"What are you studying at the 'Y'?" he asked as they started.

"Domestic science," said Claire, her eyes on the street ahead.

"Domestic—oh Lord—you're not getting married, just when you've settled into the job?"

"Perhaps," said Claire, staring at the tiny dash lamp. It might have been the reflection that set a point of light in her wide eyes.

But as she slipped into her cooking uniform she smiled. Bradford Burnham, the unobservant, had ridden away



"New Victim?" He Asked

trying to fit a spoon or a suction handle into the fingers that seemed made only for a pencil or a lettered keyboard. Then "Can Francine cook?" she wondered, and the smile faded.

Action had actually begun. Bradford Burnham had caught a glimpse of her life outside the office. But her faith faltered when she heard him asking Francine over the telephone, "What will you wear?" Why did she presume to venture into their world, where the contents of florists' boxes matched evening gowns?

Later that day, as he started in full flight for the dentist, Bradford turned to Claire.

"Order some flowers for Miss Orway for tonight," he said hurriedly. "You'll know what goes with *ecru* lace."

Claire struggled with a wild desire to send a mixed bouquet of spikes of shrieking color. If only she could afford a lace frock—honey-colored, with her auburn hair waved about her small ears, and her old gold locket and bracelets. Bradford Burnham's arms about her—a dim corner of the country club veranda.

She turned quickly to order a corsage of small coppery rose buds. Then she smiled at her wall mirror.

"You still believe that foolish clipping?" she demanded, and without answer the girl in the mirror bent guiltily over her typing.

Then, "Ask for a Budget Book," the bank invited, and Claire accepted the offer.

"Fine reading for a sedate spinster secretary!" she admitted, but after her

lunch hour she lost herself in the neat headings of its columns.

"Shelter"—A small white house with green shutters. Perhaps a picket fence about a plot for posies. A shaded lamp to glow a greeting to feet hurrying up the brick walk. A bedroom with cheery yellow here and there, shaded bed lights.

"Food"—the incense of broiling steak and baked potatoes eddied about her. A platter of fried chicken, with two strong brown hands serving it. Deep dish cherry pie, and some one reaching for more coffee. A pair of round eyes beaming above a silver mug. Hazel, perhaps; no, brown, she decided shamelessly.

"Clothing, children's"—rompers dancing on a line; brief gay frocks and small sturdy trousers. Frocks and trousers both, for a real family.

Then Miss Griggs called, shattering the dream. When Claire came back to her office, Bradford Burnham started up guiltily from her desk.

"I shouldn't have," he murmured, "but you left this book open, and it looked attractive. You're interested in this sort of thing? You believe in planning?"

"It's a safe idea for any family," she explained, "especially a new one."

Bradford's eyes went from the ruled pages to rest on Claire with a certain speculative light. Then the spell broke, and he was off for an appointment.

"The girls think I'm slow," thought Claire. "They might be surprised to see things moving."

Her heart gave a queer catch, half fright, half a wistful hope, as she put the budget book away.

In a flurry of departure for the annual publishers' exhibit Bradford rang for Claire.

"Call Miss Ordway, please," he said, busy with a crowded brief case. "Ask her to have lunch with me at the club at 12."

Francine's voice, answering Claire, was like sweetened icicles.

"I'll lunch with him," she agreed, "but tell him, will you, that I prefer to receive my invitations directly?"

For a moment Claire sat with her lips shut tight, her cheeks aglow with a sudden color.

"Miss Ordway will meet you," she reported briefly to Bradford, that and nothing more.

"You got my message?" asked Francine, her spoon poised above the cream of mushroom soup.

"Yes, and you were a dear to come on short notice."

Bradford smiled fondly, but Francine's eyes, as she lowered her gaze for a moment, were suddenly a cold hard gray. When she lifted them again, Bradford wondered why she had seemed displeased.

Later, one dull noon, he strolled in for a moment's idle talk with Claire. On her desk, among wrapping papers, lay an apron sprinkled with gay orange posies, a small square pottery plate, and a shining paring knife. He grinned questioningly at the assortment.

"New office equipment?" he queried, amiably.

"Presents from me to my apartment," said Claire. "Bread and butter and apricot jam taste much better from this square plate."

But Bradford's interest was not in the plate.

"Put on that apron," he said unexpectedly.

Claire slipped it over her head, then at something in his eyes her half-pleased amusement faded. She drew off the apron, bundled her purchases into a desk drawer, and slid paper into her machine, while Bradford wandered away, apparently deep in thought.

Francine, leaving his office that afternoon, stopped by Claire's door.

"In the future," she said with cutting clearness, "please be good enough to repeat my messages to Mr. Burnham exactly as I give them."

She was gone before Claire could answer. Startled and a little angry, Bradford sat trying to interpret Francine's remark. Then he went to Claire's door.

Her flying fingers had not faltered, but there was a spot of red on either cheek.



"In the Future," She Said, "Please Be Good Enough to Repeat My Messages to Mr. Burnham Exactly as I Give Them"

"What did Miss Ordway mean?" he demanded.

At the question Claire looked up steadily into the brown eyes watching her.

"I didn't give you all of her message," she said quietly. "She wishes to receive your messages at first hand in the future."

In the silence Bradford looked at her with an odd intentness before he strode away. Soon Claire could hear a long telephone conversation. She could catch an occasional stress, an unusual edge and authority to his tone, that made her heart thud painfully.

"Action enough now," she thought. "I tried to avoid that scene, but Francine forced it."

Then Bradford accepted a week-end invitation at the Ordway's shore home. Claire pictured the fun and the faultless meals; candlelight on silver and crystal and smart frocks. All at once the apricot jam on the square plate was tasteless, and the cup of tea very bitter. As she read the clipping again she smiled, ruefully.

"But you still keep on trying!" she told herself.

Bradford came back from that trip moody and hard to please, and Claire felt a faint glow begin to warm her heart. Nearness might have dulled the enchantment. Perhaps—! And she spent Saturday afternoon selecting a new office frock.

On a morning that she came early, she opened a new magazine to the plan of a little house, and grew absorbed in the description. Those weathered shingles, with shrubbery against them—crisp curtains at the kitchen windows—forgetting business she dreamed on, lost to catalogs and correspondence.

And in the dream some one with brown eyes came tramping out in that kitchen, demanding dinner at once, and two helpings of dessert. Some one caught and kissed her, hard and happily. She had shut her eyes to enjoy that make-believe, when a familiar voice said, "What a neat little box of a house?" Then Bradford apologized, surprised by her start, and her flushed confusion.

"But isn't it a clever little house?" he insisted, eagerly.

"It's my idea of a home," said Claire, honestly.

"For two," added Bradford, "or for three." For a long moment he studied the picture. Then, "It's a shame to come back to galley proof and discounts after that," he said as he went away.

"Enough action that time!" said Claire, a little shaken by its swiftness and nearness.

Then the papers began printing Francine Ordway's picture.

"You pit yourself against that?" Claire asked herself, studying the shrewd eyes, the languid intentness, the assured air of ignoring the photographer. "But that isn't what Bradford Burnham really wants," she insisted desperately. "He must not be cheated."

That evening Bradford, deep in a competitor's catalog, looked up as she passed his desk, and smiled in pleased surprise. Two weeks pay had gone into her smart ensemble, but that smile told Claire that the price had been none too high.

"Festivities?" he asked.

"Dinner and the theater with a friend," she explained, with just a hint of a smile as she closed the door.

As Claire disappeared he wondered with a strange dislike who this friend might be. Naturally he wasn't the only man she ever saw. Now if he had been the fortunate one, he'd have taken her to— But his thoughts drew up sharply at a sudden barrier. A man wasn't expected to take his secretary anywhere.

"If Francine expects to go on ordering a man about like this after she's married—"

Continued on Page 20

Brass Commandments

Charles Alden Seltzer

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALMENT

UPON his return from the East, where he had spent the last five years, Stephen (Flash) Lannon teams from his foreman, Tom Yates, that cattle rustlers have been depleting his herd. It is pretty well established that the desperadoes are led by a dandy named Campan, whose lieutenants are Devake, Bannack, and Tularosa. Stephen meets Gloria Stone, who is running the Bosman City Hotel in the absence of her father, and instantly develops a liking for the beautiful girl and her free, independent nature.

Gloria, secretly enamored of Lannon, hides her true feelings under an exterior which she strives to make disagreeable to the young rancher. She is somewhat jealous of Ellen Bosworth, daughter of a wealthy ranch owner.

"Flash" Lannon reverts to his old role of a two-gun man, lightning fast on the draw. Mounted on his magnificent horse, Polestar, he sets

out to put the fear of death in the hearts of the lawless element that has been making miserable the life of the honest rancher. He posts a notice in Bosman City warning the outlaws to keep away from the Bosque Grand.

The rustlers defy Lannon and drive off 300 head of his cattle. Stephen meets Campan in Bosman City and the pair go for their guns. "Flash" had previously warned Campan that the first time he met him he'd mark his beauty, the second time he'd cripple him, and the third time he would shoot to kill. True to his promise, Lannon creates Campan's cheek with a bullet.

Ellen Bosworth has learned that Clearwater, a rancher, is in league with the rustlers. He tries to hold her prisoner but she escapes with Stephen's aid. The latter promises to let off Clearwater if he will aid in rounding up the band of outlaws.

Lannon hears two men in a Bosman City store talking rather disrespectfully of Gloria Stone and he smashes one with his fist. The narrative further unfolds.

CHAPTER XVII



IN HIS way back to the Bosque Grand after seeing Ellen home and having a short talk with Bosworth, who expressed himself as being perfectly satisfied to let Lannon lead the attack against the rustlers, Lannon stopped at the Star to see Clearwater. He rode to the front of the house and found Clearwater sitting in a chair, gloomily staring into space.

When Lannon rode up, Clearwater's eyes brightened. He arose, greeted the other, and walked to the end of the veranda to glance back toward the corrals.

"All of the boys are ridin' the lower timber this mornin'," he said. "Bolton's here, though. Seems he's always got an excuse to hang around. Bolton's with Campan to a finish. He's all bad. All the other men are square. But Bolton's been tryin' to spoil 'em."

"I reckon I'd be firing Bolton," Lannon, I don't dare to fire him. Times when I've hinted about it Campan's always looked at me sort of threatenin', as though if I fired Bolton he'd take it as somethin' personal." His face reddened, his eyes blazed vindictively. "Why didn't you let the skunk instead of wingin' him an' bustin' his face up that way?" he demanded.

"So you've heard of that, Clearwater. Who brought word?"

"A Cross-in-a-Bex man who rode by here this mornin'." He said you made a monkey of Campan, that you give him his chance an' didn't drag till he went for his gun. Lordy! Lannon, if I could throw a gun that way I'd have cleaned up on this gang long ago. But I'm slow; they've all got me faded, an' I reckon they know it. I've got to set quiet an' take what's comin' to me. I don't dast to whimper!"

"You met Barkwell?" "In Salt Canyon—like you told me. Him an' the other boys was waitin' for you. They didn't find the cache nor no more hoof-tracks. I didn't tell 'em where to find the cache because you didn't say anything about it. An' findin' the cache right now wouldn't do a heap of good. There's no cattle there, an' mebbe only one or two of the gang."

"Where does Campan hang out when he isn't at the cache?"

"Sometimes at Pardo, like I told you

yesterday. But most of the time he just disappears an' no one knows where he is. I reckon he's got a place where he holes up till he wants to show himself. He'll be gone a while, an' then he'll show up, not sayin' where he's been."

Clearwater again glanced covertly toward the corral and the stable, then whispered to Lannon, excitedly, eagerly:

"Lannon, mebbe you don't know it, but you've throwed a scare into the guys which have been mixed up in this stealin'." Devake an' Tularosa an' Lally an' Bannack was here last night, grumbly an' cussin'. They're sore as hell outside. But they can't fool me; they're scared, too. There's three or four of the gang that's already pulled their freight out of the valley, sayin' they didn't want no truck with you. Some of them was here the other day when Ellen Bosworth was hidin' in the house.

"There's more boys—fellars from the ranches around the valley—which was in the gang for the hell of it an' for the little extra money they got out of it. They wasn't bad, you understand; they just thought it was a big joke to steal from the eastern owners."

"Well, them kind of boys broke off with Campan right after you put up that notice, Campan has threatened 'em, but they laff at him an' tell him that Lannon'll get him if he don't drag it. There ain't no joke in stealin' when there's a chance of 'em runnin' into you. They ain't takin' no chances."

"Right now Campan's gang is pretty slim. There's about three or four scum from around Pardo still stickin' an' an'

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Devake an' Lally an' Bannack an' Tularosa an' Bolton. You got Campan an' Devake an' Lally an' Tularosa an' the rest of the gang will come around an' eat out of your hand!"

He again glanced at the stable and the corral.

"Bolton's comin' now," he said, nervously; "I reckon he's seen you an' is comin' a-snoopin'! Lannon, you'd better go. If anything turns up I'll let you know."

But Lannon did not go immediately. He lingered until Bolton came around the corner of the house, greeted him cordially, took note of his appearance. Realizing that as one of Campan's men Bolton would be suspicious of his visit to Clearwater, he spoke shortly to the latter, for Bolton's benefit.

"Clearwater, I was in town last night. Early this morning I rode over to Benson's. Ellen Bosworth was there. She was excited over something, and afraid to ride home alone. She wouldn't tell me what it was that she was afraid of, but I suspect some one had bothered her on the ride to town. She told me she had stopped here. Do you know anything about it?"

Lannon saw Bolton's eyes quicken as he looked at Clearwater. Clearwater reddened, though he did not look at Bolton.

"Ellen was all right when she left here, Lannon," said Clearwater.

"Her imagination was bothering her, I reckon," suggested Lannon lightly. "Anyway, I took her home." He looked at Bolton. The latter was smiling with slight cynicism or disinterest, and his lips were curving crookedly at the corners.

Lannon tried to solve the mystery of Bolton's smile as he rode. Ellen had told him of Bolton's part in the affair, and he knew that Bolton must be wondering why Ellen had not talked. But even if Lannon's words had left Bolton suspicious, the man could have no knowledge of the secret understanding between Clearwater and himself.

It was late afternoon when Lannon rode to the Bosque Grand corral gates and dismounted. He went to the ranch-house and discovered that the Bosman City doctor had left only an hour before, after expressing his conviction that Ed Lane would "pull through."

Yates, Barkwell, and Perrin were in

the room with Lane, and they followed Lannon out upon the veranda after he had looked at the wounded man.

"Barkwell," said Lannon, "Clearwater told me you discovered nothing more in Salt Canyon. I sent Clearwater to meet you because I had business in town last night."

"The doctor was sayin'," returned Barkwell, grinning and exchanging glances with Yates and Perrin. "According to the doc's story, your business wasn't none secret. The doc set Thron's nose, which was bruk bad, an' patched up Campan's mug an' busted wrist. Gentlemen, I reckon that was business enough for one night!"

"I didn't think Thron would get mixed up with the rustlers," said Yates. "He's a big-mouth, but I never thought he had nerve enough to throw in on anything risky."

Lannon's face reddened a little; Yates noticed it and stared at him.

"The doc says he heard Thron was runnin' down some woman," said Perrin. "Glory Stowe, most likely. Thet thar gal is squar, an' yet thar's coyotes in the valley which keep bothin' her, thinkin' thet she's like their own thoughts. Boss, ef you busted Thron's ugly mug for talkin' about Glory Stowe, I want to shake hands with you!"

Lannon silently reached out a hand to Perrin, while Yates turned his head to hide a smile.

"Thet gal thinks a lot of you, boss!" went on Perrin, unaware of Lannon's red face or of Yates' frown. "Thet night Campan shot you I found her outside of Benson's cryin' like blazes. She was a heap sory she'd acted the way she did, I reckon, an'—But it seems like I told you thet once before, didn't I?"

"Perrin, you did," replied Lannon. "And if you want to keep the rest of the men of Bozeman City from havin' their faces busted you can sort of hint to them not to talk about Gloria Stowe."

He gripped Perrin's hand tightly, dropped it, and turned to Yates.

"Tom," he said, "I've got information about the location of Campan's cache. If there's enough men here we'll ride over and take a look at it."

"There's about a dozen of the boys hanging around," returned Yates. "They're all yearning to get a chance to get square with the guys that put Chavis out and drilled Lane like they did!" He leaped off the veranda and ran toward the bunk-houses.

"Perrin, you'd better stay here and take care of Lane," suggested Lannon.

"Boss, I reckon you're right. Keepin' Ed alive is more important than killin' one of them skunks!"

He stood on the porch and watched Lannon, Barkwell, Yates, and the other men ride away.

Riding ahead with Yates, Lannon confided to the other what had happened at the Star with Ellen Bosworth as the chief actor. When Lannon related how he had seen Clearwater shooting at the girl, Yates gave him a glance of sharp incredulity. Yates' verbal comment was reserved for the end of Lannon's recital, and then it was a mere "Shucks!" They were riding through Bear Flat before Yates spoke again.

"Well," he said then, "come to think of it, there was always something wrong

with Lem. He's always been so soft that a man could stick a finger through him! So that's what, eh? Lem's been a backslider, an' now he's aimin' to be good again! He sure must have lost his head complete, to go shooting at a woman!"

They rode the canyons in silence, alertly scrutinizing every intersecting gorge, peering into clefts, scanning the shelves and ledges. But they made rapid progress, so that just before dusk they reached the point where the floor of the canyon began to take an upward trend.

When they approached close to a sharp recess in the canyon wall, where two huge boulders of red granite stood out, contrasting with the green-



"Lannon, Campan's Gang Is Goin' to Raid Your Cattle Again. Tonight, on That South Range at Little Elk Crossin'!"

black lava of the floor, Lannon signaled the other men to halt, while he rode forward alone.

A tangle of wild brush stretched between the two red boulders, the ground sloping upward to melt into the canyon walls at a considerable distance above Lannon's head. As Lannon rode along the edge of the brush he began to think Clearwater had lied to him because it seemed there was no break in the brush, no opening such as Clearwater had mentioned. He reached the red boulder on his right as he rode up the canyon, and was smiling skeptically as he rounded it, expecting to end his quest against the rugged walls.

His skepticism vanished when after rounding the boulder he found himself riding into a cleft in the wall of the canyon, a passageway about a dozen feet wide that ran straight northward, be-

hind the wild brush and seemingly under it. He rode on, cautiously, for perhaps 50 feet. Then the passageway, which had taken on the appearance of a natural tunnel, led him eastward. He halted Polestar and sat amazed, staring straight ahead.

Before him, basking in the quiet light, was a canyon of mighty proportions. Its smooth, sandy floor was dotted with wild growth such as mesquite, yucca, ocotilla, cactus, with occasional clumps of manzanita and aspen. The canyon ran east and west, at right angles to the main canyon, and a narrow stream of water trickled down a cleft in the north wall, to follow its base eastward down the sloping floor.

The canyon was perhaps half a mile long. A dark, towering granite wall marked its easterly end. The south wall, like the north, was longer than the eastern wall, so that they resembled the sides of an oblong box, with the floor as a bottom, and the west wall behind Lannon as the fourth side. The massive tunnel through which Lannon had entered was insignificant in comparison with the gigantic size of the place; and, to pursue the metaphor of the box, it was as though the tunnel were a rat-hole penetrating the base of the western side.

The canyon was several hundred yards wide. Several gaunt, gnarled trees grew out of the sandy floor. Down toward the farther end were bushes, grass. The grass was a pale, brilliant green in dying light that seemed stronger here than in the main canyon. A few hundred yards from where

Lannon sat on Polestar were two cabins, apparently unoccupied, for no smoke came out of them; and Lannon could see no horses in the canyon.

Lannon rode back the way he had come and motioned to Yates and the others, who followed him through the tunnel and sat for some minutes staring in amazement. Still following Lannon they rode slowly forward, coming to a halt near the two cabins. Yates, Lannon, and Barkwell dismounted and entered the cabins. They were rectangular in shape, resembling light sheds. They were constructed of saguaro ribs, tied horizontally to upright logs that formed the corners, the saguaro ribs bound together with sunflower stalks and slender branches of mesquite, and the whole plastered inside and out with adobe mud.

There were no doors, but crude porches were built up of mesquite poles, the upper end forked to carry the roof, which, like the roof of the cabin, was covered with wide, coarse sacaton grass plastered with mud. Inside were bedding, cooking-utensils, and various odds and ends; bunks, benches, a stove, a wooden pail, a rough table, dishes.

Lannon, Yates, and Barkwell emerged, climbed upon their horses.

"I reckon we'd better take a look around," suggested Yates.

The riders scattered, their horses darting here and there.

Lannon and Yates halted their mounts a few feet from the cabins and watched the progress of the riders as they searched the canyon. A hundred yards or so from where Lannon and Yates stood the sandy level took a downward sweep, descending to some low, brush-crowned hills. A dry arroyo gashed a level that reached out from the southern wall of the canyon, a fringe of manzanita and aspen tracing its sinuous course. A rider rode into it, vanished. Another rider topped a ridge about a quarter of a mile from Lannon and Yates. He sat motionless on his horse for some time, peering into some gnarled brush ahead of him eastward toward the canyon end. North of the man on the ridge were other riders, working their way eastward.

"It looks as though Campan's men have pulled their freight out of here," remarked Yates. "But maybe not. I reckon that man on the ridge sees something!"

As though Yates' words were a signal, the rider on the ridge shouted and waved a hand. Instantly three or four of the other men moved toward him. One rider had almost reached the man on the ridge when the latter yelled and plunged out of the saddle. A puff of white smoke floated upward out of the brush beyond the ridge; the vicious report of a rifle reached the ears of Lannon and Yates.

Lannon raced Polestar toward the ridge, Yates following closely. Other riders had reached the spot sooner; several of the men were flat on their stomachs on the ridge, firing into the brush.

The rider Lannon and Yates had seen plunging out of the saddle at the first shot was sitting below the crest of the ridge rubbing his left arm and grinning hugely.

"Cressed me, I reckon," he said to Lannon. "I saw him draw'n a bead on me. If I hadn't dopped when I did I reckon I wouldn't be none active about now."

He seemed to bear no resentment toward the man who had shot him; it was as though the hazarding of one's life was all a part of the game, and the game a highly humorous one.

"There's two of 'em," he told Lannon. "I've seen 'em before, with Campan an' his gang. They're Pardo men." A screech interrupted him, rising above the shooting. "I reckon I made a mistake, gentlemen," said the rider gravely; "there'll only be one now!"

Barkwell's voice rose with a word of command. The shooting stopped. Riding to the crest of the ridge Lannon and Yates saw a man standing in the brush at a little distance. His hands were above his head.

"Keep a-comin'!" ordered Barkwell.

The man came forward toward the ridge, breasting the brush, keeping his hands high. He reached the edge of the tangle and stood, sullen, dirty, unkempt, staring with truculent eyes at his captors.

At a word from Barkwell, who received a significant nod from Yates, a Bosque Grand man slipped out of his saddle and took the outlaw's gun from

his holster at the hip. He ran a hand over the man in search of other weapons; finding a knife in one of the outlaw's boot-legs. The rifle that had done the shooting had been left in the brush. Another Bosque Grand man, searching the brush, called out that there was a rifle in the brush. He pitched it out, and it landed at Barkwell's feet. More Bosque Grand riders were now in the brush; the voice of one rose:

"Here's his pard, boys; he's mighty dead!"

In an arroyo back of the brush were found two horses, saddled, bridled. They had evidently been hidden there when Lannon had appeared at the mouth of the tunnel. They were led forth, and a rider took charge of them.

The captive had watched sullenly. There was something sinister and threatening in the manner and actions



*Brail Was Asleep—Forever,
Lannon Understood Clearwater
Now. Clearwater Had Betrayed Him!*

of the Bosque Grand men. The captive sensed it, and a pale, sneering smile distorted his face.

"Wa'al, I reckon you guys won't git none the best of it," he said. "It was me an' Bill that drilled two of yore men night before last. Chavis an' Lane, their names was."

No one told the man that Lane would live; the faces of the men in the group around the outlaw were notably without expression except for certain grim lines around their lips.

The outlaw laughed. "Aw, hell! don't look so down in the mouth!" he jeered. "You act like a bunch of hypocrites! Git a-go-in' an' git it over with!"

Barkwell made a sign to a rider who sat on a horse near-by. A rope switched out, the noose dropping over the outlaw's head. It was jerked tight around

his neck. Without further talk the man was led to one of the marked trees near the center of the canyon bottom. There he was forced to mount one of the horses that had been found in the arroyo. He was mockingly defiant and cursed his captors.

"I sure hate to waste a rope on this homere," declared the rider whose rope enreiled the outlaw's neck.

"You'll get his an' his pardner's in exchange," said another rider with grim humor. "You sure hadn't ought to kick on that."

The loose end of the rope was thrown over a branch of the tree, and the outlaw was drawn upward until he was standing on his horse. He cursed as the rope cut into his neck.

"There ain't no need to go to actin' like that," reproved a rider. "You're gettin' all the best of it. You didn't give Chavis any time to do any cussin'."

"If it'll do you any good to know it, Ed Lane is goin' to stay a whole lot alive," said another man.

"Hell! you guys give me a pain," sneered the outlaw. "Git goin'!"

"Mister Man," said Yates. "I reckon we're not hangin' you to get even with you. If we were thinking of gettin' even I reckon we'd have to work some Apache notions on you. We're white men, and we can't do those things. But you've got to go, and you're too sneaking mean to be snatched while monkeying with. Somebody's got to attend to coyotes like you. We're considering ourselves as the law, and I'm repeating some words which were spoken by a preacher of Sacramento in a case like this. Here they are: 'A people can be justified in recalling delegated power and re-

suming its exercise.' Meaning that if people can't get action by the courts they've got a right to do their own actin'. I reckon that's all."

Yates and Lannon rode away, to halt their horses near the cabins. The other riders lingered at the tree with the outlaw for some minutes, and then they came on and halted near Yates and Lannon.

"Those shacks are pretty dry," remarked Yates. He looked at Lannon, and Lannon nodded. Yates slipped off his horse, went inside the nearest cabin. Presently a thin skein of smoke floated out the doorway and spiraled upward. Yates emerged from the cabin and entered the other. Smoke emerged from the door of that structure. Yates followed it, stood for an instant looking back into the interior as though to make certain he had done his work well, and then mounted his horse.

For a time the riders sat silent on their horses, watching the cabins, and then in response to a low word from Lannon they began to move slowly toward the canyon entrance.

At the mouth of the tunnel they again halted. Looking backward, they saw the suspended figure of the outlaw

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The Husbands of the Missionary Society Send Haberdashery for the Heathen

Bertha Adams Backus



FOR a long time, the three bipeds in the old farmhouse kitchen had maintained an unbroken silence. The feathered member of the trio, from her perch in the sunny geranium-filled window, cast contemptuous glances at the featherless ones, who failed to take advantage of their unlimited opportunity for light conversation. Her own thoughts—which had included some most ungodly words—had been promptly squelched by a dipper of water in the firm hand of Selina Podrat. The silence that followed was broken only by the click of knitting needles and the squeak of a rocker.

Occasionally Ebenezer paused in his perusal of the almanac to exchange secret signs with the culprit, drying herself in the sunshine; for, as Selina had long suspected, they belonged to the same fraternity. Finally, tossing the classic upon the kitchen table, he pushed back his spectacles and remarked reminiscently, "On the fifteenth, I always feel like ben' dev'lish with a capital D."

"I don't see why you should have any more devil feelin' on the fifteenth than you carry around with you all the time," sniffed Selina.

"Well, you see, the first of the month I git a lot of bills, an' the last of the month I know I'm jest goin' to git 'em again, but on the fifteenth I'm as far away from 'em as I can git. Then I say to myself, 'Eben Ferrat. Now is the time for you to gambol like a spring lamb an' fergit tribulation.'"

"Shucks! That's a sure way to get yourself into more trouble. It probably accounts for your mysterious doin's the middle of February. Don't think for a minute that I didn't see you sneak out with that bunch of post cards on the night of the fourteenth. I thought maybe you was sendin' valentine cards to all the girls in town, but I found out afterwards that you sent every one of 'em to that loafin' Pristus Bolster, who wears out his pants dustin' off kags down to the store. I asked Mis' Postmaster Snoopies what they said, an' she told me there was seventeen of 'em! They all read alike, in great big letters, 'Don't Do It!' She said that up to the present time, he hadn't. Now I'd like to know what dark deed you was so afraid Pris. Bolster would do, that you had to squander 17 cents on him."

"I dunno but I was a beetle over anxious, but he'd ben ponderin' somethin' fer goin' on ten years, a-settin' on kags, an' I thought maybe he was about to perpetrate it without givin' it enough consideration. I didn't want him to do anything rash, in case the fifteenth of the month had the same effect on him as it had on me. If Mis' Snoopies says he ain't done it, he ain't! She knows! That woman wears herself out settin' up nights to read postals an' peck inter bundles—leastways, all those she can't size up by smellin' of 'em."

"There ain't enough parcels ever come to this office to keep her up late," retorted Selina. "We was talkin' about it at the last sewin' society. Not one of the



Mrs. Bowles Held Up to View a Nightshirt, Minus Buttons and Ripped Up the Back

wimmen had received anythin' by parcels-post since Christmas except Mis' Deacon Bowles an' she didn't get anything but a dozen rotten eggs."

"Now there was a bundle that Mis' Snoopies didn't have to untie. I wonder who could a-sent it," murmured Eben. "Must have been that heathen prince Mis' Bowles sent a package to in the last barrel. 'Tain't often the incense of graterood rises so high, but cheer up—if the rest of you wimmen wait long enough, His Royal Nibs'll probably send you somethin' jest as good. You must recollect that it takes a long time fer things to git here from India's Coral Strand."

Selina rose abruptly. "Ebenezer Podrat! I've somethin' better to do than sit here listenin' to your surmisin's. Speakin' of barrels, the Ladies' Aid is packin' one this afternoon. Bein' the fifteenth, it comes just right for you to do your lamb-gambolin' act on the lawn while I'm gone. You can work off a little devilishness on the lawnmower."

Ebenezer watched until Selina's rearing figure had vanished down the village street, then he reached for the peg that held his hat and coat.

"Polly Pod," said he, closing one eye, "I'll bet you a bottle of Daminsky's Feather Dye that—"

"She'll souse you in the rain barrel for that!" screamed Polly Pod, gloatingly.

"—that I'm all outer ile fer that lawnmower."

There was an unusually full meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society that afternoon, owing to the fact that shirts were to be finished for the Rev. Silas Tewksberry, missionary to India. Mrs. Bowles, president of the society, had just handed out the last shirt sleeve, when a loud knock caused the low murmur of conversation to cease. Opening the door, she was confronted by a messenger from Uncle Sam, bearing a huge bundle.

"For the Butterfield Ladies' Aid Society!" she announced in pleased surprise. "Ladies, this will make a very material addition to our donation to the heathen. I hope it may contain some much needed garments for the Rev. Mr. Tewksberry," she added, beginning to untie the bundle. Inside were a number of smaller parcels, neatly wrapped and addressed.

"Mrs. Jerome Boggs!" read the society's president, holding up a thick, well-wrapped package.

"I move," interrupted Mrs. Saunders, "that our president open these bundles and read whatever messages of cheer and good will may be inclosed. The rest

Continued on Page 18

Give Me the Ball!

A Lineman Yearns for Chance to Make a Touchdown

By Manly Wade Wellman



THE Baker line spun out of the huddle and into formation, a septet of grim terrors in mustard-yellow jerseys. The crouching left guard and tackle glared into the eyes of Brick Wallace, right guard for Stuart College.

"Here comes your dessert, red-head," they said balefully. "We'll knock those freckles clear off your nose."

"What with?" grinned Brick. He hunched his wide, blue-clad shoulders and squinted beyond the two at the Baker backfield. Fourth down and one yard to go—Baker would try for a first down. The four backs whipped into a back-slanting column. That would be the line-crushing tandem play, with the best of the four men carrying the ball, that had worked so well in the third quarter. Baker had really rammed the left side of Stuart's line then, gaining eight yards. But this time they were slanted the other way, toward Brick.

The ball shot backward from the hands of the Baker center. In the split second following Brick ducked his leather-helmeted head and dived forward along the ground line. The opposing guard and tackle, only a watch-tick slower, charged into the emptiness he had just quitted. Without rising, Brick let the Baker backs jump over him. One—two—three—and he clutched the last pair of legs. Down came the man with the ball. A whistle squealed. Disorganized cheering sounded from the Stuart sidelines. Baker had lost the ball on downs.

"Just time for another touchdown," muttered Captain Joe Kimmell, Stuart's quarterback, in the huddle. "Tony, take it off tackle."

Tony Reynolds, finest halfback in the conference, smashed for five yards. The Baker team, showing every tooth in its 11 beads, stopped the next try for no gain. Stuart resorted to a pass, which Tony caught and carried to Baker's 18-yard line before a frantic safety nailed him.

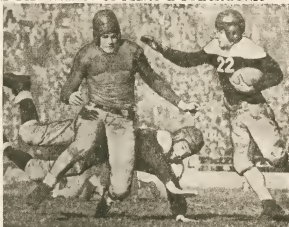
Three minutes of playing time remained. The Baker captain called for time out to reorganize his defense. Brick flung himself down beside Joe Kimmell. "Joe," he said hesitantly, "I'm going to ask you for one favor."

"Ask ahead," said Joe. "You deserve something for holding 'em on downs like that."

"This is my last year for Stuart, I've always wanted to carry the ball in a game. Call me back for a line plunge." Joe looked at him, surprised. "But you're a guard, Brick."

"I know. And guards aren't supposed to do anything but open holes for the backfield. I'm not beefing, but I'd like to pack that old punkin. Once is all I ask."

Joe looked toward the goal, measuring the distance with his eye. "Eighteen yards. We haven't muffed this touch-



Brick Watched the Ball Fall into Tony's Hands, Then Flung Himself Against the Nearest Ingoldsby Runner

down. We need it to sew up the game, even this close to the end. I'll tell you what Brick. If we score—and we will, with Tony as hot as he is—I'll let you take the ball the next time we get possession of it."

"Thanks," said Brick. Then time was called.

Tony Reynolds, hurled forward in four successive drives, made the touchdown. But the ball never left Baker's possession during the final seconds of the game.

The crack of the final gun was the starting signal for a thundering throng of Stuart supporters. They jumped from their seats and swept on to the field like an exultant wave. The foremost of them caught up with Tony, seized him and hoisted him to their shoulders. They bore him from the stadium like an emperor.

Brick Wallace jogged alone to the showers.

BRICK might have made a backfield man once, for he was smart, strong, and fast. But when he first came out for his high school team the coach had needed a guard. Brick filled in, and filled in so well that he clinched his position. He graduated as an outstanding high school linesman and was received with open arms by the coaching staff of Stuart College. A powerful, heady guard is welcome at any school. Even with poor backs, a team may sometimes score; with a poor line, it never scores.

But the masses in the stands only half-comprehend this aspect of the game and seldom watch the line. The man who carries the ball draws the attention and the cheers. The line-sundering drive of a fullback, the brilliant flash of a speed

merchant skirting end, the javelin-like flight of a long pass into the hands of a galloping receiver—these things the average fan can see and appreciate. As for the opposing lines, they are constantly merged in a straining, confused jumble, where no one can make out desperate charges and counter-charges, the struggle for mastery, the hurling back of an assault or the ripping open of a way to victory. The line is long on labor and short on glory, and of all its positions the hardest and most thankless is at guard.

But Brick Wallace, Stuart's best guard, wanted to make a touchdown.

It wasn't all mere thirst for glory. Brick had the satisfaction of work well done as he stemmed desperate rushes or pulverized brawny defenses. Yet he knew, none better, that all his muscled-out efforts, all his outpourings of sweat and blood, were only secondary to the campaign. The real purpose of all football science and tactics was to take the ball forward. That brown oval was the focal point of the game. It thrilled Brick as the Roman eagle thrilled Caesar's legionnaires. No matter how great a guard he might become, he would never feel that he had truly played unless, some day, he could run with the ball. He might even score if he had the chance. Then the world would know that he was playing, that he was a factor in the winning of victory. He might even ride on admiring shoulders, like Tony Reynolds. Surely it was not too much to hope for.

Never more than once or twice had he spoken his wish aloud. His yearnings were silent. "Just one break is all I ask," he would think. "Let me know the feel of gaining ground with that old egg

under my arm. Once I get a chance to run, I'll score. I know it."

But he never had the chance to prove his conviction. There were backs in plenty, good backs, and only a few good guards. Brick was the best of these latter, and his coach saw that he played every possible minute of every game. He cleared the way for runners, he stopped threatening advances, but he never touched the ball. That was for such men as Tony Reynolds, the lean, graceful, handsome halfback, who could run, kick, or take passes with equal brilliant success. The Stuart cheering section rang with his name again and again, game after game, as he scampered here, there, and across the goal line. And only coaches would nudge each other and mutter:

"Did you see Brick Wallace smear that defense?"

One hope remained to Brick in his consuming wish to make a touchdown. Some day he might intercept a pass. Then he would show the team, the opposition, the whole world. And he must be ready to intercept that pass when it came.

And so, every night after practice he would hold a lonely session of training. Facing the wall of a dormitory or gymnasium, he would hurl an old football at it. As the ball caromed back he would leap to right or left or straight in, his hands shooting out to make the catch. Again and again he would throw the ball, then spring to catch it on the rebound. His skill became great, almost perfect. He seldom missed. But only in these practice hours did he catch balls—never on the field.

Throughout the football season he trained thus, and throughout every football season, and between seasons. His senior year came. He and Tony Reynolds were the two veterans of the squad. Tony did the starring. He was the idol of the campus, with his picture in all the papers and his name on the lips of every fan. Yell leaders called for cheers with a bellowed "Reynolds! Reynolds! Reynolds!" at the end. Brick got perfunctory applause, the due of any one who filled a line position. Only the experts discussed his name as they pondered the selections for the all-conference eleven. Games came and went. Tony went spending to glory and touchdowns while his admirers fought for the privilege of carrying him off the field. Brick battled grimly and obscurely and at the end of each battle jogged away alone. The autumn passed quickly, until the season's climactic game, the annual grudge clash with Ingoldsby on the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

SATURDAY afternoon was come. It was twenty minutes until game time. Sitting or lying on blanketed benches in the locker room, the Stuart squad paid attention to what the coach was saying. The muffled noise of a crowd came from the stadium outside. Across the field, the players knew, the Ingoldsby coach was also exhorting his men.

"This is the last you'll hear of me this season," said the Stuart coach. "I've been proud of you, mighty proud. All I ask is that you make me proud of you again today."

Brick nodded. He liked the coach. Here at least, was somebody who appre-

ciated a guard's place in the scheme of things. But the coach went on.

"Today we're depending mostly on one man. That man is Tony Reynolds. We know what he can do, and so does Ingoldsby. Every Ingoldsby man will watch him. They'll swamp him every chance they get."

He swept the roomful with his eyes. "Take care of Tony, all of you," he commanded emphatically. "Protect him on every play. He needs his strength to score. See that he is able to save it."

Brick smiled, half bitterly. Football was Tony's game, after all. It was invented for Tony's benefit. There was no talk of protecting Brick Wallace. No, Brick was a guard, everything that the word implied. A guard meant a protector, some one who received attacks meant for another. He was to face Ingoldsby's maulers, take the blows and the bruises. Tony would have the chances to score touchdowns, inspire cheers and thrill to the golden moment when he would be carried, a conquering hero, from the field.

But he put the thoughts from him. They were ungrateful. He'd play, and play well. A few would recognize his worth. But if he could only get the ball for one run!

The coach had finished speaking. Lining up, the Stuart players cantered out on to the field. Ingoldsby's squad, dressed in crimson, already awaited them. After running a few warm-up signals the two teams faced each other.

Ingoldsby kicked off and Joe Kimmell, taking the kick on his own six yards, returned it for 13 before two tacklers overwhelmed him. On the first play from scrimmage George Guthrie, the Stuart fullback, went for four yards.

"Rush them off their feet," said Kimmell in the huddle. "Take it around left end, Tony."

Tony took it and was stopped back of the line.

"Try it again," was Joe's next order. "They'll not be looking for a repeat."

They were, though. Again Tony was nailed for a loss.

"Ingoldsby's riding Tony," groaned Joe as he called a punt. The ball went to Ingoldsby at the far end of the field. A see-saw of punts and runs got the ball to the center of the field, and there it seemed to stay. No man on either team could gain consistently, least of all Tony Reynolds. The half ended without a score.

"They're on to Tony even worse than I expected," said the coach during the rest period. "Don't burn him up uselessly, Joe. Use the other backs and save him. Then, when Ingoldsby begins to look sleepy, shake him loose."

He passed along from bench to bench. "How's it going, Brick?" he asked his right guard.

"Coach," said Brick, "I wish I could carry that ball."

"I wish you could too, boy. We need somebody who can gain against Ingoldsby."

"I don't suppose," Brick ventured, "that I could try? Just once or twice?"

The coach patted his shoulder. "There was a time when you might have done it," he said, "but you've been a guard too long. You've just half an hour of foot-

ball left. It's too late to learn new tricks."

He passed on. Brick's brow furrowed. Half an hour left? Too late! His heart sank. Yet fate might still present him with his long coveted chance. Not even the coach could gamsay fate.

The second half went as the first, scoreless. Once Ingoldsby was stopped within 22 yards of a touchdown and once Stuart fumbled on Ingoldsby's nine-yard line. Then the ball went back to mid-field. At the far end of the last quarter Ingoldsby had driven to Stuart's 30 yards. It was third down and six to go.

Joe Kimmell stole a look at the time-keeper's watch and held up one finger to his mates. One minute! Ingoldsby came out of the huddle, every man tensing in position like a coiled spring. "He!" cried the quarter. The fullback dropped back to pass.

The ball was snapped, Brick bounded forward like an arrow, his outflung hands deflecting opposition to left and right. Others of the Stuart line drifted through, too many for the fullback's secondary defense. Rattled, hurried, the fullback passed the ball clumsily toward Brick. It went low, wabbling.

Even as Brick dashed in, he saw that his dream was coming true. The ball spun to meet him. His hands plucked it out of the air as he ran. A halfback, dropping to block, tried to tackle him instead. He side-stepped, almost into the arms of the fullback. It was too late to dodge, and Brick did not try. He jammed his shoulder into the other's armpit. The fullback fell sprawling while Brick reeled from the shock, then recovered and ran away, with only the goal before him.

The ball was his! He was running with it! He hugged the prize to his racing heart. He would make the only touchdown of the biggest game of the year. He would be immortal. He would ride on men's shoulders. The one run of his football career would be a legend at Stuart for all time. Only 50 yards left to go. Only 40.

"Brick! Brick!" It was an agonized voice, the voice of Tony Reynolds. Brick snatched a backward glance. Three men were almost on his heels. Two of them were the fleetest players of Ingoldsby's eleven, closing in from left to right. Trying to force his way between them and catch up with Brick was Tony, running his fleetest and holding out his hands for the ball.

A backward pass, that was what Tony wanted. Brick could flip it back to him, and it would be legal. But why should he flip it? He, Brick, had taken the ball away from Ingoldsby. He was entitled to make the touchdown—

What touchdown?

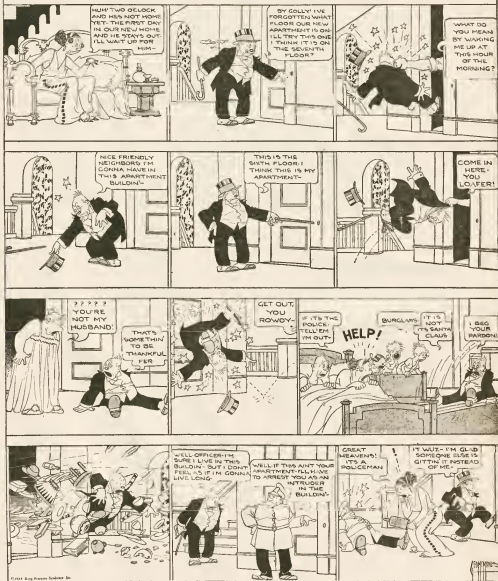
A galloping thought struck him. He would not score. Tony might be able to block one pursuer, but the other would get him. He could not escape. The coach was right, as a guard he had learned to hit opponents, not dodge them. If Tony had the ball he could write away from one tackler or both. One more touchdown for Tony.

Brick drove his dreams away. "Tony—catch!" He tossed the ball back, watched it into Tony's hands, then flung himself to the right against the nearest Ingolds-

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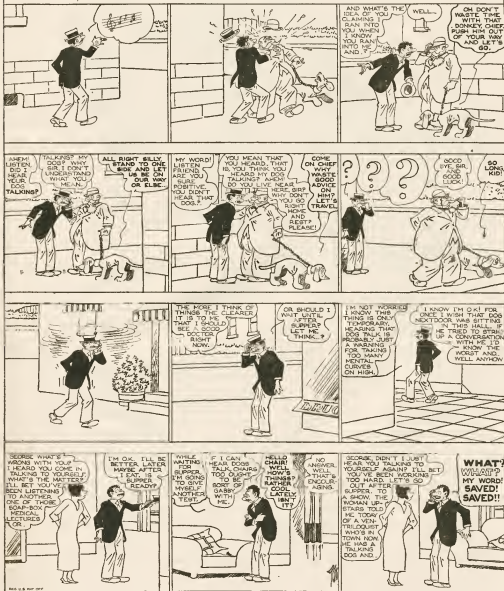
BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



THE BUNGLE FAMILY

By H. J. Tuthill



Honored

A Story of a Strong Man and Stout-Hearted Dogs



USH, Padre! Mush!"

Jerry Martin's shaggy lead dog tightened his sled-traces as the whip cracked over his back.

Gusts of wind whipped icy pellets of snow in the driver's face. The air beneath lowering clouds was heavy and oppressive. A blizzard was about to break over the Northland.

Old Padre's ten winters in the North had taught him to dread blizzards and to seek shelter at their approach. The dog was tired and stiff, but now instinct urged him to hurry and he sped with increasing speed toward the hazy southern horizon.

Balanced on the light sled behind his racing dogs, Jerry scanned the sky anxiously. He had no desire to be caught by the on-coming storm in the sparsely wooded country through which he traveled. If the blizzard held off two hours longer, he would reach Fort Lac Bien in time.

For two years Jerry had shunned Fort Lac Bien, trapping far to the north, spending his summers in solitary, aimless wandering, even penetrating that lonely waste within the Arctic Circle. But the unaccountable trek most of the fur-bearing animals to the south had compelled him to return to his old trap-line along the Little Muskeg River, and the scarcity of provisions had forced him to make this trip to the fort.

Being left an orphan in his early boyhood, Jerry had been brought up by James Steele, factor at Fort Lac Bien. When Jerry was ten years old the wife of his kind benefactor died leaving a new-born babe, whom they named Isabel. Thus the two children had grown up together as brother and sister. The passing years developed the girl into a beautiful woman and the boy's affection into a strong man's love. When Isabel was 18, Ted Baird, a young government surveyor, arrived at the fort in his shining red monoplane. There had followed a brief courtship in the midst of which Ted made a record dash to Winnipeg with his plane to secure serum when Isabel had been stricken with diphtheria. Sick at heart to see the brotherly love for him give way to a deep absorbing love, Jerry had left the fort with his dogs at the first approach of winter and had traveled endless miles into the frozen North. There he had heard from a wandering Indian of a gay Christmas wedding at the fort. Now as he was nearing Fort Lac Bien old memories came surging back.

Inside the factor's store at Fort Lac Bien, a small group of men were gathered. Without, it was almost as dark as night although it was only 3 o'clock in the afternoon; for the blizzard had been raging for an hour, with ever increasing fury.

The strong northeast wind brought

with it blinding clouds of snow and a cold so intense that it seemed to pierce to the very bone.

The door swung open with a blast of icy air from without and a snow-covered figure entered.

"Jerry Martin, you bloomin' prodigal! Boomed Jim Steele aghast sprang forward and seized the young man's hand. "Gad, man, but I'm glad to see you," he cried, "heard you were back to your old Muskeg trap-line. Oh, news travels up here in the North as well as anywhere you know," he laughed at Jerry's look of surprise.

Again the door opened to let in a flurry of snow and a tall compactly knit young man entered.

After shaking hands with Jerry, he turned to Steele.

"Isabel is sick," he said abruptly. "Sick! Did you say, Ted?" the factor exclaimed. "Have you called Anita?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," Ted Baird replied. "And Anita says that we must have a doctor, and have him before midnight."

The factor walked to the window and back before he spoke. His face had gone strangely white. "Anita is always right, Ted," he said slowly. "that old squaw knows more about sickness than most doctors. But how in heavens name can we get McTavish from the post tonight, in this blizzard? Your plane—" He began uncertainly.

"Would not last five minutes in this gale," Baird said. "Fifteen miles and back in a storm like this. God!" He dropped into a chair and groaned at his own helplessness.

"Could a dog-team make the trip, Jerry?" inquired Steele, turning abruptly from the window from which he had been watching the inferno.

That had been the very thought which had been assailing Jerry's mind since he had learned that Isabel Steele was ill; but his own team of mongrels was old, and leg-weary.

"A good team could, with a good driver," he replied slowly.

"Tom Lavene has the best team in this country—" Steele declared.

"Here's Lavene now!" Ted cried, as a sturdy, swarthy-faced man entered the store in a flurry of snow.

"Lavene," Steele called, "Could I have a word with you?"



Jerry Was Tying Up the Slope, His Tall Form Bent Beneath the Weight of Old Padre

The new-comer shuffled forward. "What you want?" he asked shortly.

Ignoring the tone, the factor replied, "My daughter is ill, Lavene. We must have Dr. McTavish here before midnight. Would you go to the post for him?"

The Frenchman shrugged and threw out his hands. "Mc take drive out tonight in this 'orm? Me drive 15 mile to post for doctor? You tink me cr-r-ry?"

"I know we have been anything but friends in the past, Lavene," Steele said, "But this is a matter of life and death. Jerry here, says a good team can make the trip. Yours is the best team at the fort, Lavene. We must have the doctor and there is no other way to get him here. Will you go? I'll pay you well."

The Frenchman shrugged again. "Non," he said with a grimace, "Me no go."

"I'll give you \$200 if you will go, Lavene," cried young Baird.

Lavene's eyes gleamed greedily, but the memory of the severe beating Steele had given him years before for attempting to steal from his store came back to him. He shook his head sullenly. "Non, me no go out in dis 'orm, not for twenty thousand dollar." He put his hand on the door as if to go.

"Lavene?" It was Jerry's voice, cold and clear. "Give me your dogs and I'll make the trip. Ted says he will pay you the \$200 just the same."

"You tink you tak odder man's dog an' go, uh?" Lavene shrugged, "Non,

me dog no go out in dis 'form; not for twent' tousand seek woman."

Jerry's lithe form straightened, the long muscular fingers twitched, the cords of his neck stood out and his eyes darkened and deepened. He took a step forward as if to throttle the grinning Frenchman where he stood. With an effort he checked himself. A look of fear shot into Lavene's eyes, there was a swift opening and closing of the door and he was gone.

Jerry drew a long breath. He was breathing hard and there was a light in his eyes that neither Steele or young Baird had ever seen there before. He poked up his worn parka and turned to Steele, the hard ring was still in his voice when he spoke. "I am going for McTavish!"

Two hours later his team stood ready for the trail. Invigorated by their feed of frozen fish and the three-hour rest which Jerry had forced himself to allow them, they stood alert, dimly outlined in the faint glow of the lantern Steele held in his hand.

"God be with you, my lad," the factor cried above the fury of the storm. A brief hand clasp with his two friends and Jerry was gone, a tall mackinawed figure, striding swiftly in the wake of his team. A moment later and the storm had engulfed both men and dogs, but from out the swirling snow-scur came the muffled command, "Mush, Padre! Mush!"

For a moment Steele and Baird stood silent. Then the younger man spoke. "How in God's name will be ever be able to keep his direction?"

"He's depending entirely upon that lead dog of his, Ted," the factor answered. "Before Jerry got him, Padre was lead dog for three years in the mail team between here and the post; he could follow that trail blind-folded. But he's old, Jerry's dogs are all old. But somehow I feel he'll make it."

IN HIS snug quarters at the H. B. Post, old Dr. Amos McTavish was seated in a home-made rocker before a blazing fire, deeply absorbed in an ancient medical magazine. The clock on the mantel chimed the hour of nine. McTavish stirred, took the briar pipe, which had long since gone out, from his mouth and yawned. He listened for a moment to the raging of the storm and bent unconsciously nearer the fire as the gale whipped the stinging sleet and snow against the window pane.

"Beastly night," he muttered to himself. "Guess I'll turn in."

A sharp rap at the door interrupted him. "Come in," he called, rising and facing the doorway.

For a moment he had difficulty in recognizing the man who stood before him, enveloped in a blanket of snow.

"Jerry Martin," he cried, as the man removed his fur parka, "where did you come from on a night like this?"

"From Fort Lac Bien, doctor," Jerry replied. "I came for you. Isabel Steele is ill; you must be there before midnight."

McTavish swore softly under his breath; he had no need to ask the nature of the illness.

"Can we make it?" he asked, as he set his aluminum coffee pot on the stove and began swiftly to pack his kit. "We've got to make it."

Ten minutes later they were ready

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for the trail. As he stepped outside, it seemed to McTavish as if the wind had whipped the very breath from his body. In his 30 years in the North he had seen few blizzards that could compare with this. The sleds and dogs loomed before him as indistinct mounds.

Jerry donned his snow-shoes and McTavish proceeded to do the same.

"You had better ride, doctor," Jerry shouted. "You may have to walk later, if the dogs give out."

An hour passed. Jerry grimly calculated that the distance they had covered would be about four miles.

Half-way up the lake he was forced to take one of his dogs from the team. All the animal's four feet were bleeding and raw, and its necessarily slow progress had hampered the team in the dash up the lake.

This dog, a short-legged stocky brute, with unmistakable Airedale blood, slumped down in the snow beside the trail and watched the team speed on into the night. As his fellows disappeared, he howled dimly, struggled painfully to his feet and limped on in their wake.

Jerry, hearing the howl, in a momentary lull of the storm, smiled. "Good old Toby won't be many minutes behind us," he muttered.

Fifteen minutes later the dogs halted so abruptly that Jerry, running behind, stumbled headlong upon the sled. He sprang up quickly and McTavish joined him. They found the dog second from the lead stretched out upon the snow, only the whites of the brute's eyes showed in the pale glare of McTavish's flash-light. The snarling lips were foam-flecked. The beast was dead when they reached him.

Jerry's breath caught in something that sounded strangely like a sob.

Resuming his position behind the sled he swung his raw-hide over the backs of the three remaining dogs and his ringing command rose above the howling of the wind, "Mush, Padre! Mush!"

On up the last mile of the lake trail they sped, and out over the rough barren stretch that marked the last lap of their journey. Here the trail was completely wiped out and Jerry again resumed his grinding task of trail breaking, while McTavish donned his snow-shoes and traveled along behind.

Jerry glanced at his watch. It lacked but 40 minutes of midnight, and four miles lay between them and Fort Lac Bien. Could they make it? Ordinarily it would have been easy, but he was weary to the point of exhaustion, his dogs were dead-tired. A great doubt began to assail his mind, but he shook his great shoulders as if to escape the burden of doubt and resolutely quickened his pace to a long swinging trot.

He had gone perhaps 40 rods when a shout from behind halted him. He wheeled to find that his team had stopped. He could just distinguish them through the swirling snow. He retraced his steps to find his dogs crouched in the snow. Old Padre whimpered softly as he approached. "Mush!" Jerry commanded. Slowly the old dog rose to his feet and hesitated, whining in the depths of his hairy throat. Again came his master's command. Abruptly the old leader swung

from Jerry's snow-shoe trail to the left, across the untracked waste. For a moment Jerry stared after him; a mist rose before his eyes that was not caused by the storm.

"God bless him," he muttered under his breath. "He knew I was off the trail."

On and on at the same monotonous trot, till it seemed to the aged Dr. McTavish, plodding along behind, that human endurance and brute power must fail.

Ten minutes later came the break. As of one accord the dogs sank to the snow and lay with heaving sides. At the command of "Mush" old Padre struggled to his feet, then with a great indrawn gasp, rolled over on his side and lay whimpering softly. The dog next to the leader, a yellow mongrel, made no move. He lay looking at the two men with a dumb beaten look in his eyes. The grizzled sled-dog, the youngest and strongest of the team tensed his quivering muscles at the command. His eyes gleamed and an ominous rumble rose in his throat. Unconquered, defiant, the wolf strain in the Husky bade him fight to the very last.

Before Jerry could give his command again, Dr. McTavish spoke, "Lad," he cried, with difficulty making his voice carry above the storm, "don't torture those poor brutes any more. See that line of scrub-spruce?" He pointed to a hazy indistinct bulk of trees. "They lead up to the fort, don't they?" Jerry nodded.

"We can't be more than a quarter of a mile from the fort now," McTavish shouted. "By following that line of spruce, I can make it alone. You take your time, Jerry. Don't kill these dogs of yours on the home stretch." And without waiting for a reply McTavish set off towards the fort.

Fifteen minutes later he entered the Steele home.

"Jerry's coming about a quarter of a mile back on the spruce trail," he told the factor, who welcomed him with a silent hand clasp. "Dogs played out. If he don't come soon, Steele, go after him." He went into the sick room. Five minutes later, he was back. "She'll be all right, Steele," he told the worried father and went back to his patient.

Standing outside in the storm, a lighted lantern in his hand, Steele waited Jerry Martin's coming. Thank God, Jerry had been able to make the trip, and McTavish had been in time. Isabel would get better. These thoughts confused themselves in the old man's mind, as he peered into the blizzard.

Ah, Jerry was coming now, toiling up the slope toward the house. Steele started forward to meet him, then

paused and a low cry of astonishment rose to his lips.

Revealed in the dim light was a sight which would live in his memory always. Jerry was toiling up the slope his tall form bent almost double, beneath the weight upon his shoulders—the weight of old Padre, the greatest lead dog in the North, old, weary, beaten—but not broken! Behind, trailed the Husky—the dog with wolf blood in his veins, dragging the sled, swinging his head from side to side while his breath came in great wheezy gasps; and upon the sled lay the gaunt frame of the yellow mongrel.

Three days later, as Jerry stood ready for the return trip to his trap-line on the Little Muskege River, there came to him a message that Isabel Baird would see him.

A sense of awe swept over him as he entered the bed-chamber and stood again in the presence of the woman he loved. He took the hand she offered and looked into the eyes filled with a gentle reproach. "You were going away without seeing me?" she chided softly, "without giving me a chance to thank you for what you have done?"

Jerry's answer was unintelligible.

"And how are your poor dogs, after that terrible trip?" the faint voice asked.

"Fine," Jerry smiled boyishly. "A little stiff maybe, but none the worse. Old Padre is just as keen to be on the trail as ever, and Wolf is just the same ill-tempered brute—it's his nature though," he added by way of apology, and added, "Toby's feet are almost well again, you know he came in early the next morning."

The girl nodded.

"I am so sorry about King—" she began, then, sensing the ring beneath his lightly spoken words, she hurried on. "I know you are anxious to be on the trail, Jerry, so I shall not keep you any longer. But I have some one to show you."

She smiled as she drew down the covers revealing a little bundle beside her. Jerry bent to look at the tiny morsel, its little, red, wrinkled face seemed strangely beautiful to him and he touched one of the dimpled hands almost reverently.

"Do you know what we have named him?" she queried.

Jerry shook his head. Isabel Baird's eyes wandered to the window from which she could see the team ready for the trail and her father standing beside them gently stroking the graying muzzle of old Padre. A wonderful light crept into her face as she answered softly, "We have named him 'Jerry Martin,' after one of the grandest men I have ever known."

HABERDASHERY FOR THE HEATHEN

Continued from Page 11

of us ought to keep right on finishing up these shirts."

"Second the motion!" piped up Miss Eudora Sipple.

Theresean, Mrs. Bowles tore open the bundle without further parliamentary procedure, held up to view a well worn pair of trousers, and read aloud the accompanying note:

Dear Mrs. Rogers,

Kindly sew on two or three suspender buttons—two would do—before beginning on the brethren's things. An awful responsibility has been resting on that one button for a month.

Respectfully yours,
JEROME BOOGS.

The sudden burst of laughter at Mrs. Boggs' expense died away as the priest-

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Haberdashery for the Heathen

Continued from Page 13

dent opened another package. Holding up to view a ragged shirt, she read the message pinned to the tail.

Mrs. Joe Saunders.

Dear Madam: Please put this in the barrel and take out a good one for me—one that's been mended lately. Mrs. Tewksberry will have plenty of time to renegotiate this, for she don't have to sew for the Rev. Silas.

Yours as ever,

J. M. SAUNDERS.

P. S. The weather being mild, I don't need a shirt.

The smiles were not so general this time, for each woman expected that her turn might be coming soon. Many tried frantically to recall the exact occupations of their respective husbands that afternoon, also the condition of certain necessary articles of masculine wearing apparel. Mrs. Boggs consoled herself by reflecting that, at least, Jerome's pants, though well-nigh buttonless, were not actually ragged.

"Mrs. Pristus Bolster," intoned the president, carefully spreading out a pair of seafish overalls, to which was pinned the following plaintive request:

Dear Mr Bolster

Please reveal lip, overhauls. I can't set down all the time tho I'm doing pretty well at it.

Twenty yrs.

PRISTUS BOLSTER.

P. S. When you git 'em mended leave 'em in the barn.

"Somebody put Pristus Bolster up to that trick! It ain't a bit like him to hide in the barn all the afternoon just to git his overalls mended," exclaimed Mrs. Bolster, with flushed and wrathful countenance.

"Mrs. Susan Witherspoon," proceeded the president, holding aloft a bunch of stockings arranged like a bouquet and tied with an enormous bow of green ribbon. Nestling in the heart of this imitation floral offering, was a note written upon lavender scented paper. Its tone was a little more intimate than that of the earlier communications. It read:

Dearest Susan,

As I don't need stockings this afternoon, I thought it would be a good time to get them all mended. Remember me to the ladies and tell them that I am glad so many of them are like my toes—able to be out.

Yours truly,

JONAS WITHERSPOON.

P. S. Don't sit up for me.

Miss Sipple tried, unsuccessfully, to smother a titter in the folds of the Rev. Mr. Tewksberry's unfinished shirt. For the first time in her life, she was glad that no one had ever suggested a change of name for her. Her levity, however, proved to be her immediate undoing, for Mrs. Bowles' keen glance detected the package marked "Miss Eudora Sipple." Waving at her a weary looking vest, the president read:

Dear Miss Sipple,

Respected Miss,

It wouldn't be right to leave you out just becaz you ain't married—taint your fault. Would be so kind aster mend the pockets in this waistcoat? If I tried to put a wedding ring inter one of 'em, it might leak out. A word to the wise is worth two in the bush.

Your humble servant,

JAREZ GUMBLE.

P. S. Take your time—I don't need it till sundown.

"It strikes me as bein' mighty funny that so many pillars of the church shouldn't be needin' any of their workin' clothes this afternoon," snorted the enraged Eudora. "I haven't seen the notice of any Sunday school convention this week."

At this point the president, seeing her own name on one of the remaining bundles, resorted to strategy.

"Members of the Butterfield Ladies' Aid Society," she said, smilingly, "we all appreciate the delicate humor concealed in these surprise packages; but, as the time is short, I move that we put the rest of the bundles away and attend to the finishing of Brother Tewksberry's shirts."

"Second the motion," said Selina Podrat, hurriedly. The conviction had been growing upon her that Ebenezer's devilishness hadn't been confined to gambling on the lawn that afternoon.

"There ain't but a few left," said Miss Sipple, peering over the president's shoulder. "Mebbe we shall hear from Deacon Bowles," she added maliciously.

With heightened color, Mrs. Bowles tore open a small package, and reluctantly holding up to view a nightshirt, minus buttons and ripped up the back, read the following carefully composed missive:

Mrs. Emma Bowles.

President, Ladies' Aid,

Dear Madam. Kindly send this night robe to the Rev. Silas Tewksberry as my donation. In the warm climate of India, the advantages of a ventilated sleeping garment are more apparent than in our variable New England climate. If he is in need of more, I will gladly send others, as I am abundantly supplied.

Sincerely yours,

PHINEAS BOWLES.

P. S. I shall not be home to supper.

"It must be a convention," sarcastically remarked Eudora, "if the deacon is with 'em; but there is one more package—'praps that will solve the mystery."

"Mrs. Selina Podrat," announced the president, glad to turn the attention away

from her domestic affairs, by spreading upon the table a pair of Ebenezer's pants, cut off as near the hips as possible, and a bottle of No-Dyspep tablets. The expected message was forthcoming. It read:

Dear Selina,

Please hem these shorts and send 'em to the Prince with my dearestations. He should be interdoosed to wearin' moral clothing by easy stages. The No-Dyspep are for him to eat after takin' anything he shouldn't order. In the left hand pocket, you'll find a special delivery from India's Coral Strand.

In haste,

EBENEZER.

P. S. I won't be home till late. Hevin' a leetle spree.

Upon investigation, Selina discovered a small parcel almost entirely covered with foreign stamps. It bore the address of the Butterfield Ladies' Aid Society in strange hieroglyphics. As the ladies crowded around, Selina opened the queer looking package and laid before their astonished eyes a set of false teeth, suspiciously like the ones that Ebenezer had never been able to use when masticating. She was thanking a kind providence that no literary effusion accompanied this final proof that she spelled with a capital D, when the inside of the wrapper was found to contain this touching message:

Dear Wimmen,

Don't sen no mor BARKS—they is enud shurtz now to last my wives for sum time. We hev it mister tooksbury but sherd never ferghiten.

Yours,

Prince Yemiheli Yah-Hoo.

P. S. Hefer takin' his last trip he ast me to sen you this reslie.

On the banks of the old swimming hole sat Ebenezer and the other leaning pillars of the church, joyously munching sandwiches and drinking small beer.

"Feller sheep and goats," mumbled Eben, with a toothless smile, "whatever retribuition is a-comin' to us on the sixteenth of the month, let's fergit it all—lamb-gambled while there's anything left of the fifteenth."

ACTION, NOT DREAMING

Continued from Page 7

He frowned, and all at once sat facing some unpleasant facts to which he'd been shutting his eyes.

"Til let Bradford Burnham see this," Claire told herself as she came back one rainy noon with a bulky parcel.

She timed it so that she was opening the parcel as Bradford came in, and he walked over to her desk, openly curious. "Well, if that isn't the darnedest!" he said, grinning.

She had lifted out a small wooden wagon with pegs which held bright wooden blocks. He picked up an orange one, studying it with interest.

"For some small relative?" he queried. "No," said Claire, "for the janitor's baby. I often borrow him on Saturday or Sunday. I keep him until he's had his supper, then I bathe him and sing to him, and get him back in his crib just before he falls asleep."

Claire was sorting proof, and Bradford could not see her eyes. He stood turning over the orange block, remembering a chance remark that Francine had not intended for his ears—"Oh, one child perhaps, if one has a good nurse."

Francine, slim and tantalizing, perched on a diving raft, and Claire, humming in the twilight, with a drowsy baby cuddled against her shoulder. He set the block on its peg, and went away without a word, suddenly aware of the dangerous path he had been treading.

"That bit of action may wreck everything," thought Claire, "and after you let him see right into your heart!"

Her hands, checking lists, were none too steady.

That evening Natalie Jepson looked after her suspiciously as they left the elevator, noting the hollows in Claire's cheeks, and her air of heart-sick weariness.

"Wouldn't you know," she asked Agnes, "that one of those quiet ones would climb up on a limb like that, and fall off? No wonder the poor goof looked dizzy."

A chance came to buy out a competitor in another city, and Bradford Burnham left one morning for a final unexpected meeting with never a glance at his engagement calendar. Claire, gathering up the mail, looked at it casually. Then she dropped into the desk chair, staring

own fault, she told herself defiantly. He'd been unreasonable and more hard than she liked to think about, concerning her work and her country.

And this was her country, she thought with a thrill, looking out across the limitless miles of rolling sand and sage with the light of the late day striking fair and clear on the weathered pinnacles of colored stone that stood stark on the levels, like ancient fingers pointing a lost race to heaven. Yes, her country, even though she had been born in the North and come here only so lately. Her country by every bond of soul's homing, for here she was at rest and satisfied.

At that thought she stirred from the open door and went about some household task, for another thought had trailed it; the thought of cities and teeming streets and tall stone canyons made by man. To save her life, she could not help the chill that shivered over her. "Well," said Serge at supper, "it seems lonely without Rod. Good old scout. You're a lucky girl, Sonya."

"Am I?" said Sonya. "Sometimes I wonder."

"What? About Rod Blake? No finer man in this world! He's still young, and one of the best lawyers in New York; rich, partly by his own efforts, partly by family inheritance of good blood and impeccable principles. I'm surprised at you."

"Yes. Well, maybe," said the girl, "but do you think Rod's kind, Serge, really kind in his heart? He's been pretty cold about my work here, especially among the Indians."

"I grant you that, Sis, but I can understand his feeling. He loves you, wants to marry you, and you hold him off. He lays it to them, of course."

"Of course. I can understand, too, but I don't like it just the same. Oh, well, I've got six months, anyway."

Lila looked at her across the table for a long moment with a strange expression in her eyes, but said nothing. Later, as the two women washed the dishes and set the house to rights for the night, she looked at her again.

"Sonya, darling," she said calmly, "Rod Blake is not the man."

Sonya started and nearly dropped a pretty cup, but caught it deftly between her elbow and the floor.

"Smart!" she laughed.

"Me!" said Lila.

"No, me. Didn't you see that sleight-of-hand?"

"Oh, that. Don't be silly. I'm talking seriously. I don't believe you love Rod, honestly, deep down, as a woman should love the man she marries. I haven't thought so for a long time, for nearly all of this last visit of his."

A flame of loyalty flared up in Sonya. "Puff!" she said hotly. "Of course I love him, the old dear. But can't one see a loved one's faults? I just don't think he has the milk of human kindness in him, if you see what I mean. Go on, put Babe to bed, and don't worry that yellow head of yours. By this time next year I'll be Mrs. Rodney Blake, riding around New York in a limousine—and you'll be darned lonesome out here without me."

"And how!" said Lila ineclegantly but fervently. "I don't want to think about it."

"Then don't. There's a long time and a lot of things between."

How long and how many, measured by their importance, Sonya herself could not foresee.

THE next day she rode over to Chee Wash again and found Little Moon so much better that she was sitting up with most of her clothes on, the ruffled calico skirts and the dark jacket of velvet buttoned with small Mexican coins which an Indian woman wears always no matter what the weather. Also she found one of her enemies. This was Yellow Buck, a medicine man, who regarded her service to his people as a direct inroad on his territory and hated her accordingly.

The old man spoke no English, but none was needed to tell the white girl how he felt toward her and her activities. His small opaque black eyes followed her every move as she dismounted and entered the Hogan. She was part and parcel of the new regime; she smelled to him of government and schools; she was trying to replace his sings and devil-chasing with the medicine in her saddlebags. She was all bad, and he advised Two Fingers of his mortal danger in having her about.

But Two Fingers smiled and told him flatly that the medicine in the Blue South Woman's bag was more potent than his. Had not Charlie No Hair's baby died—and Hosteen Big Man's woman—despite his, Yellow Buck's, best magic? Yes, well so. Little Moon had not died, had she? She was eating muton broth and crackers today. Tomorrow perhaps she would stand on her feet. So, it was well.

And the old man got on his horse and rode away in high doggone.

"Two Fingers," said Sonya when she was ready to leave that day, "who was the man who came here on foot the day my man came after me? Tall man with sun hair, sky eyes?"

Two Fingers shook his head.

"No can say," he said. "Come here for other horse. His horse go bad lame. I give him horse, go get his next day. In corral now. Good horse. No see so good horse, ever. Come see."

Sonya swung up on Darkness and followed him around the Hogan and up a

little rise to where several brush-and-stick corrals stood among some low trees.

There, in one of them, stood such a horse as she had not seen ever, either. Taller than Darkness, who was a fine specimen of native animal which the Indians called American horse, bright as new gold and of its color, though paler, this horse was built with a grace and beauty that transcended description. His neck and legs were longer than seemed possible; his face was dished a little below the eyes, which were large and soft and bright; his ears were small and pointed, while a mane and tail of almost snowy white flowed to shoulder and heel in amazing profusion.

"My heavens!" said Sonya wondering. "My heavens! You're right, Two Fingers. No see so good horse, ever. And this is not the one—"

She had almost said, "He rode on Lone Mesa," but checked herself.

"Well," she said instead, "I must get going. Long ride home. You take good care of Little Moon. I'll come back in three days."

So she jogged away down Chee Wash and enjoyed the long ride back to the utmost, her hands crossed on her pommel, her hat down over her eyes, smiling a little just in the joy of living and the beauty of the desert.

There was no sick about, now that Little Moon was getting well, and she would do some of the things she had wanted to do for herself for a long time. For one, she would go over and spend a couple of days with her friend Myra Little, on the Black Sheep Ranch.

She hadn't seen her for three months, and she was very fond of her. Also she would make up the piece of turquoise silk which she had bought last time she was in the Big Town.

No telling when she might need it—the Neidingers, over east, might give another dance—and her old pink one was done for. Altogether her thoughts were pleasant; the day hot but sweet with winds. She was glad she was alive and here.

And then there stole into her mind this disconcerting thought: "Why?"

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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GIVE ME THE BALL!

Continued from Page 18

by runner. His flying body, like a leg of hickory, mowed the man down. Even as they fell he saw Tony neatly, almost effortlessly, dodging the other man, then going into his yard-eating stride that spelled touchdown.

For a moment Brick lay still, pinning his man down. Then he rolled free, rose to hands and knees and looked goalward. At the same moment the earth rocked with cheers. Tony had crossed the goal line.

Kimmell's kick scored a perfect goal after touchdown. Even as the teams relaxed the next moment, the game was over.

Once more the victory-flushed students of Stuart College were pouring on to the field. Brick saw their hurrying forms, heard their wild yells of triumph. The advance guard had already

captured and elevated Tony Reynolds. Brick turned away. One more jog to the showers. It would be his last. He was through with playing football forever.

But he did not jog far. Suddenly he was ringed about with shining, shouting faces. Hands grabbed his legs and arms and tossed him skyward. He landed on the shoulders of the mob. Next moment he was riding like a hero—like Tony Reynolds! Hundreds of voices were chanting:

"Reynolds! Reynolds! Reynolds!"

"Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!"

Then he realized: They had seen at last that he made it possible to win. He had won the game for all the world to see when he threw the backward pass to Tony. Had he done otherwise there would have been no score, no glory for any one.

He was too happy to smile.

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a wood at its southern limits. Northward were some low hills. Beyond was an upland, then a mesa.

After a ride of perhaps two miles, Lannon found himself in another gulch. A sharp turn after he had ridden another half-mile brought him to the brow of a mesa overlooking Bear Flat. The moonlight streamed down into the flat, disclosing the herd. He was probably a mile from the edge of the herd, and the cattle appeared to be massed, as though sleeping.

Lannon rode the rim of the mesa until he reached a trail that the cattle used when entering the flat. Not until he was more than half-way down did he notice that the cattle were acting strangely, and then he rode Polestar. Polestar was running when he struck the level, and Lannon was leaning forward in the saddle, his eyes blazing.

The rustlers had been there! The cattle were milling, moving in the general direction of the eastern end of the flat. As Polestar flashed past a bunch of steers that were lying down and did not rise as the gray horse passed, Lannon circled them, rode back, brought Polestar to a halt, and stared down at them. Dead, every one! Shot! Some had their throats cut. There were possibly 20 in the bunch. More were lying nearby.

Lannon rode among them, a terrible rage gripping him. He slipped out of the saddle, threw the reins, and bent over a cow whose calf was bleating beside her. She was lying on her side, her tongue lolling out, her eyes staring. Lannon drew the calf out and felt of the cow's body. It was still warm. He stood erect and scanned the flat. There was no sign of any horsemen, not even of Brail. Lannon leaped into the saddle again, jumped Polestar over some other dead cows, and raced around the flat, searching for Brail. The main herd had milled eastward until stopped by the sheer buttes that rimmed the flat in that direction. There it had halted. Lannon could hear the bellowing of steers, the dismal bleating of calves seeking lost mothers.

Dead cattle were everywhere. They littered the floor of the flat in appalling numbers. It had been a colossal slaughter, a bloody carnival, a hideous butchery by fiends! Lannon's brain

reeled as he sat in the saddle. He got Polestar going again and sent him among the prone cattle, searching for Brail. He found Brail's horse. It, too, had been killed. The saddle was still on its back. Nearby was Brail's rifle, empty. At a little distance from the horse Lannon found Brail. He was lying on his side, his head resting on his right arm, which was extended.

Brail was asleep, forever. A bullet hole in the forehead was ghastly evidence of the fatality that had overtaken him.

Lannon rose from Brail and stood erect for an instant. He understood Clearwater now! He knew why he had been skeptical of the man's sincerity.

CHAPTER XX

LANNON again climbed on Polestar. He sat in the saddle for a little space, gazing eastward toward the basin where Yates and the other men waited for the rustlers that would not appear. He knew that after a while Yates, becoming uneasy over his long absence, would send men to search for him; and as he had mentioned Bear Flat to Yates, Yates would instruct the men to hunt for him there. Then the men would discover what had happened. They would ride back to Yates, and Yates would go on the trail of the rustlers.

Lannon meant to find Clearwater. He would certainly kill the man. This latest outrage would precipitate a war that would not end until Campan, Dewake, Lally, Bannack, Tularosa, Clearwater, and all others of their kind had met the fate that they so mercilessly dealt others.

The butchery in the flat was significant of the attitude of the rustlers toward him; it was an expression of their defiance of the warning he had posted in Bozang City.

Of all the emotions that seethed in his veins as he sent Polestar scampering across the basin toward the western rim, regret that he had withheld his hand from Campan was the most poignant. He had made the foolish promise to defer killing Campan because he had thought Gloria Stowe had interfered that night at Benson's because she loved the man. He knew differently now, had known since Perrin had told him about how he had found Gloria crying that night. But, despite that knowledge, he had kept the promise he had made to Campan in her presence. And because he had kept the promise he had been responsible for the death of Chavis, the wounding of Ed Lane, and now the killing of Brail.

There was little doubt in his mind that if he had killed Campan that night in front of the post office in Bozang City the other outlaws would have left the basin, never to return.

He sent Polestar halted to the western slope of the basin, halted to, an instant at the crest to let the animal breathe after the long climb, and then headed him over the plains, westward.

In an hour after leaving the rim of the basin he was riding westward in an arroyo north of the edge of the mesa, which he had circled on the day he had seen Clearwater shooting at Ellen Bosworth. When he thought of the man's actions after he had knocked him from

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his horse that day he was bitterly self-contemptuous.

"Fooled me clean!" he muttered aloud. He rode now in a spirit of grim exultation, in an exuberance of cold joy that made him, as in the old days, contemptuous of all his enemies and sneeringly derisive of their power to harm him. The old recklessness was upon him; the love of the old life again dwelled in his heart. He affectionately slapped the black handles of the guns at his thighs, assuring himself that the next time he used them they would speak in the convincing voice of the past. There would be no more false sentiment in his heart toward his enemies.

Campan and his men deserved death. The first time that he met any or all of them they would get what they deserved. Thus he cast all his five years of eastern training behind him and became again the terrible figure he had been in the old days, an apostle of the law of the gun.

When he reached the far side of the basin rim he rode Polestar into a timber-grove near the edge and gazed down upon the Star buildings. He saw a light in a window, stabbing the moon-lit level surrounding the house.

He rode out of the timber into a gully and went down a slope to another wood, the same that Ellen Bosworth had entered on her way to the Star. He rode slowly, letting Polestar find the trail, for the wood was so dense that the moonlight did not penetrate. When his body no longer showed a tendency to slip forward in the saddle he knew Polestar had reached a level; and presently he saw a fence in a patch of moonlight beyond the edge of the timber. He followed the fence until he reached the stable.

Riding into the shadow cast by the building he dismounted, threw Polestar's reins, and stood for an instant, listening and peering into other shadows near-by. He saw no one. He moved to a corner of the stable. Whence he could see some of the other Star buildings. There were no lights in any of them, no signs that any of the Star men were about. Leaving the stable, he crossed an open space and reached the shadow of the bunk-house. There he again paused to gaze about him. There were a number of horses in the corral, but his interest centered upon three that stood outside the corral fence. They were saddled, bridled.

Lannon moved toward the ranchhouse. No light came through any of the rear windows, though he saw a luminous streak through one window, which evidently came from a lamp in one of the front rooms of the house. He made his way along the rear wall until he reached the window through which shone the luminous streak. He saw that the light came through an open doorway in the front of the house. Through the doorway he could see a man's legs. The legs were stuck out, the feet crossed, as though their owner sat in a chair. The feet were booted, spurred. A bracket-lamp on a wall of the room shone brightly, revealing a faded carpet, a chair, unoccupied; a center-table, a picture on the front wall.

Lannon moved stealthily around the side of the house, away from the three horses at the corral fence. The room in

which he had seen the legs was on the north side of the house; Lannon saw the light from the lamp coming through a window on that side. It was the light he had seen from the rim of the basin.

A bush of wild roses screened the window. The moon, streaming its silvery light down into the basin from a southeasterly direction, did not touch the spot where Lannon stood looking through the open window into the room.

Five men were inside, Clearwater, Tularosa, Lally, Bannack, and Bolton.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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Dr. L. C. Charland



Montreal Surgeon

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Signed, L. C. Charland, M. D.



